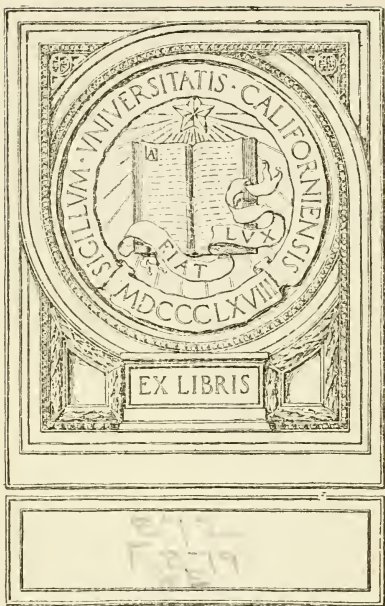


KLAUS  
HINRICH  
BAAS





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KLAUS HINRICH BAAS



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# KLAUS HINRICH BAAS

## THE STORY OF A SELF-MADE MAN

BY

GUSTAV FRENSEN

AUTHOR OF "JÖRN UHL," ETC.

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN BY ESTHER EVERETT LAPE  
AND ELIZABETH FISHER READ

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# KLAUS HINRICH BAAS

## CHAPTER I

UP on the edge of the high dry land on the coast stands the old Holstein seat Heisterberg. The air is so clear thereabouts that in sunny October, when the dry rustling beansheaves are being loaded on the wagons in the sloping fields to the west of the village, the young workman, standing unsteadily on top of his moving load, sometimes declares that he sees the towers of Hamburg and the bridges of the Elbe, and, on the other side, the lights of Cuxhaven rising out of the water.

From a barren little field just west of the village one can see even farther. It would be just the place for a graveyard, in which ghosts of these and of bygone days could sit on the mounds and monuments night after night and be sufficiently diverted — by the wide firmament, sparkling with stars from the depths of the sea to the heights and to the forests on the other side, by the silent night sky, by the raging storms, and by the gleam of lights from the houses. Or it would be a good place for a battery; for though narrow, it is long enough to admit sixty cannon in a row pointed directly at the Elbe. Or it would be a good place for a historian; for what things of moment have happened near this place — and what may still happen here? It is the very gate of the whole country.

Now, however, there is nothing in or near the field but a little gray thatched house with low walls and windows, and a tiny gable window to let a little light into the garret.

In this house, the walls and roof of which were renewed alternately every thirty years, so that it never sagged or collapsed — since, indeed, it was never more than thirty years old, — there had been living for many, many years, indeed for centuries, a family named Baas. The word Baas means *lord* or *master*. But the people of the lower Elbe like a joke, and it would be hard to tell whether the man that first bore this name, a thousand years ago, was an able fellow, the owner, say, of an Anglo-Saxon ship — for the word is still used in the shipping trade — or whether he was a plain fool. The Baases do generally show a certain enterprise and aspiration in their erect carriage; and in their eager open bearing they have something of the convincing air of a seaworthy ship proudly cutting the foam, a certain suggestion, so to speak, of “Here I come”; but their character does not correspond entirely with this air. They are always getting out of bounds, because of a generous, if sensuous, fire and a sort of well-intentioned folly; in these very follies they show that their race contains good old stock and a kind of repressed passion, but they also show that it lacks steadiness and tenacity and silent determination. Some of the race have even lost this ardor altogether. They still have, it is true, a pretty fair physical bearing, but they have grown cold and shrewd. In looking at them, one would think involuntarily of unpaid cobblers’ bills; and that is fitting, for they have an especial leaning toward shoemaking — or else toward small public jobs. And they, too, are subject to sudden notions and are likely to get out of bounds; but with them this is due to an avaricious soul and a petty calculating spirit.

It certainly was doubtful, then, whether the name had first been given a thousand years ago in earnest or in jest, — to a great man or to a would-be great one. It was doubtful — until one of them married a woman whose harshness and temper, like flint, struck into flame the old smouldering fire. Then it was almost possible to believe that the first Baas had been really great; and the old proverb came into play, that he who would place his stock

upon its feet again must take unto himself a doughty and capable wife.

On a windy day in April, many years ago, a cheerful little Baas, who had been working out with a farmer all summer, was going back to school for the first time from the thatched cottage on the high field. Although he was an orderly little fellow, and, in the way of the Baases, had a vigorous and erect bearing, he was nevertheless far from being in a comfortable temper, for among the sheaves in the field he had forgot much of his book learning, and the teacher was a strict man. And even more formidable than the teacher was a young girl, only a little older than himself, but very clever, whose duty it was to get up into the ranks again those that had dropped behind in the summer. She lived in a wretched, lonely little place far out on the edge of the cultivated land. She was the daughter of crusty, taciturn people, and was herself silent and surly. She had tormented this little Baas the year before, had, indeed, singled him out, and he was afraid that it was going to begin all over again.

The minute they had finished the song and the prayer, she was standing there behind him to examine his writing exercise. His little fingers, still stiff from handling reins and pitchfork, had not yet written a whole line, and she struck him with the little ruler she had concealed in her hand.

Since she was the teacher's assistant, the little fellow — he was only about eleven — did not dare to report his ill-treatment to the teacher, although he was standing beside her. So he went home crying, to tell his mother. Angry to have anything of that kind done to her dear little fellow, but, like her boy, afraid of the teacher, she accosted the girl as she was going by the house to her lonely field the next day, and said, "Are you going to try hurting my little boy again, you big beater, you?"

The girl cast her shrewd sharp eyes toward the angry woman and the boy clinging to her apron, made a bow, and strode rapidly by. She was a rather thin creature, loosely built, with a long stride.

She cuffed the youngster all winter whenever she could, and showed him in every possible way that she did not like him. Even in the next winter, when he had grown stronger than she, she kept up her resentful interest in him, persecuting him with her sharp glances and her quick scorn, and delighting in casting up to him how he had held fast to his mother's apron-strings.

Then he went into service, first with one farmer, then with another. He was growing up rapidly, and for many a long year he did not see her again.

When he was twenty, and had just begun his military service, he had to serve in the war with Denmark. The third man in his squad happened to be a young candidate for the ministry, a clever enough fellow, but clumsy about doing things. He was constantly getting into trouble because he could not manage to keep his outfit, his boots and arms, in order. One day when they were besieging a fortress, he had received another reprimand because his rifle was dirty. Jan Baas, ready, skilful, and obliging, as usual, took the rifle from him as he sat there drearily shaking his head over his own awkwardness, and cleaned it. The poor distressed devil of a candidate sat beside him, saying, "I can't make it up to you at all"; but Jan Baas comforted him by saying magnanimously, "Some day, when you are a minister, you shall baptize a baby for me for nothing." The candidate promised that he would, much to the amusement of the whole company. When Jan Baas came back from the campaign, he liked hugely to tell this story, as he sat with other idle young folks with his glass of beer. He would look around him right sturdily and boldly, like a true Baas, and say, "So this is where I'm ahead of you all! I have a free baptism coming to me!"

In the year following the war his father died, leaving to him and his brother three heritages, the worn old thatched house on the high field,—it needed new walls again,—a herd of a hundred sheep, which he had led to pasture around the fields of the marshland, and an invalid mother. His brother, a covetous soul, complained that he was not

strong, that he had, indeed, had a rupture; that he was so melancholy that he had already stood three times in front of the well in the yard, intending to jump in, and that he had been able to save himself only by repeating three times, "Praised be Jesus Christ!" He added that his brother might make over the herd to him. Then, sad, desolate, and solitary, he would journey from village to village until he came to Sylt. His brother, he added, might keep for himself "the ancestral seat," and with it the love of their dear mother, of which he was not worthy, however dear both these things were to him. Jan Baas looked down, ashamed to look the rascal in the face; and then he assented to the proposal. The brother went off with the herd, sold it, and off on the upland married the rich, elderly, withered daughter of a farmer. He never came around again.

Jan Baas remained in the house on the high field, went to work in the fields for the farmers, and in the evenings mended at the wall. At the end of the week he put his wages into his sick mother's hand. Once in a while on a Sunday evening he did make love to a girl. When people rallied him, perhaps on account of the free baptism he had in prospect, perhaps on account of his division of the estate with his brother, he looked gayly around, laughing so deliciously at himself and at the joke of the whole thing that people declared that the best thing in all Heisterberg was certainly Jan Baas's laugh.

When his mother died, when he was about twenty-five, he thought that he had better get married, but he did not know to whom. He certainly had liked all the girls he had taken out with him heretofore, but he hadn't liked any one of them as a wife. He reasoned that something very special was necessary: he wanted to understand her, and yet not be entirely able to, to feel a great and silent respect for her, and a perpetual surprise.

While he was on the lookout, he met at a dance the girl that used to rap him over the knuckles. Nearly thirty now, she had a settled and sour sort of beauty, though she was still pretty thin and had the same sharp

eyes. She was a dressmaker. She had remained single because she was as thorny as a thistle, especially when a young man came near her. They danced together all evening without saying a word, for whenever he tried to say anything she said that she never talked while she was dancing; and when he tried again at the intermission she said that the air was very thick and that she didn't want to swallow any dust. When on the way home he insisted on talking, she flared up at once. It sounded like the hissing of glowing fire-tongs in water. Then she went off, leaving him standing there. And the same thing happened three or four times.

Meeting her at another time, he declared that they really ought to talk over the wedding a little. She turned away as if he had insulted her gravely, and said sharply, "It's all one to me; I don't want to."

"Well, then," he said guardedly, "on such and such a day."

She was quiet for a while, annoyed that he was whistling. What else could he do? If he talked, she was wild with anger. Then she broke out, "Your house is going to fall in pretty soon."

He shook his head, murmured cautiously that he had mended all four walls, and went on whistling to keep from talking.

"I'll be pretty careful about marrying a Baas," she cried angrily. "The Baases are all whistlers and triflers." And with that she went away.

He, however, was quite satisfied with the outcome of this little interview. He notified the pastor of their wedding, and on Sunday, taking his accustomed seat under the organ loft, he looked rigidly before him, lest he might chance to catch her eye and make her flee. At the end of the service he walked from his seat toward the altar, without looking to right or left. After he had stood there alone for a time, she came up behind him and stood by his side, not close to him, however. Her "Yes," following the pastor's speech, came out with much the same sort of jerk with which she would have thrust back a



calf sniffing at her hand. After the wedding they went through the rainy autumn weather along the narrow path toward his house, he leading the way. When they were nearly there, she turned off the road into the house next to theirs, saying curtly, "Their girl has run away. I've agreed to do the milking." So he went into the little garden beside the house to dig. And all the while he sang and whistled, quite distracted between surprise and respect and concern, just as he had expected to be.

Although they made a living — she helping along cleverly with her needle — and although two healthy children were born to them, and although Jan Baas was sober and industrious, his wife was nevertheless usually in a bad temper. The very fact that he was kind and that he could keep so good-natured tormented her difficult nature; and it hurt her pride that her robust womanhood was always desiring his love again. The very sight of his handsome gay countenance, which was secretly her great delight, stirred her to anger. The result of course was that many hard words passed under the little straw roof; there were many gusts and hailstorms.

Things were at a particularly bad pass when the third child was born and baptized.

Since his wife seemed to be in real danger, and since the roads were practically bottomless on account of the heavy autumn rains, Jan Baas, alert and ready, as usual, flung himself bareback on his employer's horse and rode as fast as the horse could carry him through the wild stormy night to the town and to the house of the midwife. When he got there they told him that she had been called to a house in another street. As he stumbled along through the streets of the dark little town, dragging his horse along behind him, he recalled how four years before he had been a gay young chap walking and whistling through these very streets he was now travelling as the father of two children, anxious about the welfare of his wife and the third child. In his concern he mistook his way and knocked at the door of three old maiden ladies, who were sitting up with their sick canary. When

he asked them if the midwife was there, they were insulted at the very idea and slammed the door in his face. He went on to knock at the next house, which was also lighted up. But the people there were one stage farther along than he and his poor wife, for they were already celebrating the baptism. They noisily urged the forlorn night traveller to drink a glass of punch at the door. Then the young mother, taking pity on him, drove one of her guests out to show him the shoemaker's house, where the midwife was.

Tying his horse to the stumpy linden standing like a post in front of the windows, he went in toward the light in the shop, where he found the midwife, a lean, elderly little person, standing beside the bed in which the shoemaker's wife lay. Her husband, who was using his involuntary vigil for his work, was hitting away lustily, sitting on his bench with his face toward the window so that only his great bald head was visible. Since he was quite hard of hearing, he never talked if he could help it; he didn't even look around, or concern himself at all about the stranger. The two apprentices, who usually slept in the big bed in which the wife now lay groaning, were sitting on the bench by the blue plaster wall, so drunk with sleep that they couldn't hold up their heads. From the adjoining room could be heard the regular breathing of the two sleeping children. Jan Baas seated himself on the solitary chair beside the door and whiled away the time by scraping the mud from his high boots with his penknife and laying it, neatly moulded into clods, on the floor. He sat there for two hours until the child had arrived and the mother had been looked after.

When he went out into the night with the old woman, she expressed great surprise that instead of a wagon there was only a big clumsy bony bay waiting under the linden. She made up her mind promptly, however, and flinging her outside skirt over her head, started off bravely beside him in her short underskirt. Holding her bag with one hand, he guided his horse with the other. It was dark, wet, and stormy, and the roads were deep with mud.

Once in a while, when the moon broke through a rift in the clouds, he took a good look at the old woman striding along beside him, her long legs spattered with mud up to the knees. "It will take hours this way," he thought. "There's no help for it — we've both got to ride on the bay." He was a roguish sort of fellow, happy in any sort of beauty, whether it came from heaven or whether he met it in a beanflower or in a woman's eyes. And he was getting really uncomfortable now. "She doesn't look very promising," he thought, "and in her fright she'd squeeze me pretty hard; but, heavens, what wouldn't a man do for his wife and child?"

He tried to persuade the old woman to get up on the horse too, so that even if they did not get along any faster she would at least be out of the mud; and then, if she would take her bag, he could urge the horse on a little. No, she said, she had never ridden on a horse, and she happened to have a particular grudge against horses. Guiding the long-legged bay up to a hedge, however, he tried again, and finally succeeded in lifting her up, and in handing her the bag, too. Then he got up behind her. On they went again — her skirts flying, her arms clutching at him tightly, and her bag flapping. The mud spattered them continually, and she kept letting out horrified little shrieks. And thus, within a good half hour, she arrived to help the baby into the world.

At dawn, with her skirts well tucked up, she set valiantly forth again. She made Jan Baas promise that he would keep a dead silence on the subject of that ride, but he broke faith. Though he did not tell his wife, she heard the story from others, and rebuked him with the utmost contempt. It was just one more instance, she declared, to show exactly what kind of people the Baases were, when they couldn't even take seriously so important an event as the birth of their own child. They were such eternal jokers and laughers that they didn't even stop at making their own children the objects of coarse raillery and gossip. Indeed, twenty-six years later, Klaas Hinrich Baas went with his wife one market-day to Burg, where they always dance

with their elbows out, and where, on account of the great crowds, they usually have to push their way along. When Klaas happened to bump into a girl, she made a spiteful face at him, saying, as she pushed by him with an angry look, "No wonder you push your way everywhere, for it wasn't the midwife that brought you into the world, but the devil's grandmother on a big black horse."

About four weeks later, when they began to consider the baptism, further difficulties arose.

In the first place, they couldn't settle about the godparents. Two cousins whom they asked declined; they belonged to the covetous sort, and wanted to save their Sunday clothes, and they also feared to incur further responsibilities from their cousin's rapidly increasing family. Then Antje Baas asked her old father, who, both because he was made that way, and because he had lived all his life in that lonely field, was rather hard to get along with. She was at her wits' end, however. They also asked Libbert the tinker, who was so absolutely shy that he turned his head aside when people spoke to him. The pastor was away on a trip, but the sexton said that a minister from another place was coming to substitute for him, and that he would attend to the baptism.

So there they sat on a dull November day in the little low brown room, Antje Baas in her black frock, Jan Baas in white shirtsleeves, as befitted the father of a family, the two godfathers in black jackets, the children in spick and span Sunday clothes, all waiting for the minister.

He came. And Jan Baas recognized him at once as the candidate for whom he had cleaned the rifle. Jan was struck dumb. He squeezed his chair into the corner so that his face was invisible in the dim light, disguised his voice, and absolutely ignored the threatening looks his wife sent him. Then she tried to make her father talk, but he was disgruntled because his daughter, out of pure contrariness, had placed before him a little flowered coffee-cup that she knew perfectly well he couldn't endure. The tinker Libbert, who was at his

very shyest, kept his head on one side the whole time the minister was there, looking out the window at a hen pecking at a beet.

In her confusion Antje Baas took the two children on her lap by turns, first chunky little Peter, then little Lotte. And all the time she kept pinching down their little noses, as usual, with her thumb and forefinger, to prevent them from acquiring the arrogant trifling character of the real Baas nose, to which she bore such a grudge. Of course she talked to the minister, too. He drank a cup of coffee and smoked, and drank another cup, and talked away with Antje Baas and the youngsters, who, having outgrown their first awkwardness, were beginning to talk a little.

When he was ready to go, it was absolutely necessary for Jan Baas to come out of his corner. He walked along the inside wall of the room till he came to the little entry, where he asked the minister, in his disguised voice, how much he owed him. The minister, with a show of surprise, declared that that had all been settled long ago, and that he was to get this baptism free. And Jan Baas had only time to stutter, "No offence, sir, no offence," before he was gone.

When he returned to the room he found his wife at the doorway, telling the three that they had behaved like fools. She was so sharp and shrewish that the tinker Libbert, in greater and greater embarrassment, kept shifting his eyes over the whole length of the wall, up and then down again. Indeed, he couldn't look at anything really steadily for days afterward. And the old man, merely to spite his daughter and provoke her further, really became a little more agreeable. Jan Baas, with significant gestures, many times repeated, waved away the minister and the day forever.

When the two others had gone, she turned to her husband contemptuously. "Well, you made a pretty tale of that! You've told a thousand times how you answered him then, — and now! You flabby fellow! You're a great hero — as far as talk goes. That's the way with the

Baases — big on the outside, but inside! And you're the windiest of them all."

He laughed, partly from amusement, partly from confusion, and went out to feed the cow.

When he had gone she took the baby, just baptized Klaus Hinrich Baas, from the cradle, turned his head, and recognized that though he was a fine baby, he certainly had that trim, overbearing Baas nose. She pinched it forthwith with her thumb and forefinger. And sitting there, with her face, as usual, tense and severe, she resolved that she would look after him sharply and perhaps make something of him some day.

## CHAPTER II

THE cradle they used Antje Baas had brought with her from her own house in the lonely field, where it had been used in her family for more than a hundred years. In the course of many years the rockers had been worn a little flat, and the cradle bumped twice on every swing. Their old neighbor Griesbach advised them to get new rockers, for, she said, she hadn't a doubt that a certain persistent headstrong tendency in Antje Baas's family was the direct result of that double jolt. She reminded Antje that her father was pretty hard to get along with; "and then you," she added, "you yourself are not exactly easy to manage." Antje Baas was bent on getting new runners at once; but just then the old mustard woman, Wulf, who had the reputation of being very knowing, happened to come along. "Let the cradle be, Antje!" she advised. "Who knows that it hasn't shaken all kinds of vices and weaknesses out of the child? Remember that you married a Baas!" Since new rockers would undoubtedly cost money, and since Antje Baas was thoroughly convinced of the essential unworthiness of the Baases, the old rattle-trap cradle remained as it was, and the baby continued to thrive in it.

Soon he was able to stumble from the little brown room across the hall to the kitchen. But when he discovered that his mother's temper was easily aroused, and that she was pretty free with her hands, he took to going out of the house toward the little gate, which he couldn't open, where he waited till Peter and Lotte came home from school. When they came, they stayed out at the eldertree by the gate, while Lotte cried in a deep voice, "What is that crawling along there on the ground? I do believe it's a little dog — or is it a mouse?" Then, pretending

to discover him suddenly, she opened the gate and knelt before him. "Why, it's a little boy!" and taking him by the hand, she went with him into the room.

There they quickly set to work at their tasks, the baby sitting between them and looking on. Lotte asked him now and then, "Is this right, sir?" And when he nodded in answer, she shook his hand to thank him for helping her. On the other side of the table sat brother Peter, also writing, or studying with his hands over his ears. He kept declaring that he simply couldn't get anything into his head, and whining, "Where shall I even begin? I'm terribly miserable!" Many a time he cried, and rubbing his face with his hands, black from sharpening his pencil, moaned again, "I am so stupid — oh, how stupid I am!" At this Lotte often whispered, "That's on account of the jolty cradle." Then she helped her brother, though she was smaller and younger than he.

Sometimes, while they were still studying and writing, Peter, as usual, dabbing at his eyes, their father came home from work. In came the great blue-eyed, yellow-bearded fellow, placed his spade in the corner, stamped the mud off his big boots, and reaching for the baby, took him on his knee. What a ride he did have then — up and down again and again! And how he did clutch that beard and hold on tight! What a face his father made, begging him to let go! He did let go at last, proudly opening his hand to show the hair he had pulled out! And then! Then came mother, with the big black iron pan in which the beans were cooking. And she always scolded the father: "I do wish you had a little more common sense!" And taking the boy from his father's knee, she put him by the cradle, which already held another little chap, and sharply told him to "rock him."

There was one particularly severe winter. He was going to school then, but he came home earlier than the other two and hurried to get into the warm room. Running from one window to the other, he breathed hard on the frost-covered panes to make clear places. Through one of them he could look down the street, and through



the other out over the marsh as far as the Elbe. He could see the snow driving along the street and drifting mountain-high against the walls and hedges; and then, when the snow stopped, and the air was clear again, he ran to the other window, to count the pillars of smoke rising from the chimneys in the marshland, and the masts on the Elbe, rising above the dike. Then it began to snow again, and finally everything was covered with white—the roads, and the great field, the thatched roofs, and the red chimneys on the schoolhouse and church; only the old poplars around the church, constantly tossed by the wind, were dark. Every minute the boy saw something new, and each time he turned from the window into the little brown room to tell his father, who was sitting by the stove reading the newspaper or a book while he rocked the cradle with his foot. But then, when everything was so pleasant and comfortable in the little brown room, in came the mother, to nag and scold the father. “Why in the world are you sitting there doing nothing?” she said, or, “How can any one read the paper so long?” or, “For pity’s sake, leave off that silly singing. What in the world will the child think of it?” And she came in again and again. The first few times the father laughed at her attacks and answered her jokingly; but finally he said, gravely and quietly, “If you come in here again, I shall have to strike you. You must see for yourself that I can’t do anything else.” Then she turned pale, went out, and did not come back, and there was peace again in the little brown room. The little fellow couldn’t make much of all this yet, but he grew quiet.

At last spring came, and one especially bright and beautiful day. His father came home from the field, seized him, when he went to meet him, and swung him up till his face brushed against the cherry blossoms hanging from a little tree. When he shrank away from the bees buzzing among the blossoms, his father raised him and shifted him about till his face was close to a great big bumblebee. And then there was the greatest shrieking and laughing imaginable. When the mother came out of the house to

scold them, they both sat down very properly on the bench beside the door and gazed away over the broad fields to the ships moving along the Elbe. And when, as they sat there, they began to hum away to themselves, the mother came out again, scolding: "What will people think of you sitting there singing on the very street? I can't bear to hear it," she said, slamming the front door, which had been standing wide open. Getting up, the father opened the door and went on humming. They heard the mother coming out at once from the kitchen to close the door. The father got up, opened it again, and went on humming. When the mother, hastening out from the kitchen again, reached the door, the father sprang up, seized her on the threshold, and hugged and kissed her. Quite overwhelmed, she stood still, saying gently, in a tone of sweet surprise, which the boy had never heard before, "You're so sudden, Jan!" And then she broke away, saying in her old harsh, angry way: "Let me go. Everybody can see us." Laughingly the father let her go. The boy marvelled about his mother, shook his head wisely, and wrinkling his brow, said to his father, "She's always making such a fuss, father!"

Then came autumn, and with it a day of keen and clear west wind, blowing as if it would blow away the world. Klaus and his crony, their hands in their trousers pockets, stood at the neighbor's open door, watching the cabinet-maker. When they had made up their minds that the man was in a good humor, they came nearer and nearer, until they were standing right in the middle of the shop. He called out to ask them whether they would like to see something that no one had ever seen before. They came in, open-eyed, a little uncertainly, for the cabinet-maker was sometimes a terror and sometimes a joker. Taking the wood through which the saw had just passed, he showed them the freshly sawed surface. "That," he said, "not a single soul has ever seen before." They nodded gravely, and then went into the corner where the shavings lay in heaps, to get some of the big, hard, curly ones to make wheels of.

There was a strong wind sweeping along down the broad road like water through a sluice. They started the wheel — the wind caught it at once — and now for a chase! How it sped! How they sped with it! The teacher had said at school that God runs faster than the fastest horse. Well, let him just run like *that!* They chased along behind it, far out into the open field.

In the meadow at the side they found a young fellow ploughing. Taking courage, they climbed over the dry ditches and followed him along the furrows while he told them how old Whiteface there on the left had sat down in the ditch yesterday; and that he was going to Hamburg one of these days with a couple of horses; and that his sister, who lived in Hamburg, was about to marry a sailor who had been around the world twice already. They walked along behind him, listening to him, sometimes leaning out to look ahead at the stubbly gray earth as it rose under the gleaming ploughshare and then fell into a dark heap beside it, and sometimes looking back at the sea-gulls flying in flocks over the fresh furrows, gleaming white and fluttering against the blue of the sky.

And when they had had enough of this, they went on over the fields to seek new adventures. They commented with the greatest assurance on everything they saw: the sucking colt standing beside its mother; the wheat, which had too many weeds; the orange lilies in the ditch; who the workman was, walking over there in the field, and whose wagon it was, standing under the sails of the wind-mill. In this way, now along green roads, now across fields, they gradually approached the village again, hot with running, looking, and talking. They caught sight of a group of children standing beside the pond in one of the farm-yards. What did that mean? They must get there! Klaus's chum thought it was time to be getting home, but Klaus didn't hear. When they got there, they saw that the pond had been drained and that the back of a fish was sticking up here and there from the mud covering the bottom. Wide-eyed, Klaus stepped closer to see what that fish there looked like, and that one, and that

one over there. And heaven only knew what else might come out of those depths! Then some men waded in, caught the fish, and threw them out on the bank at the side. There, glittering all silver and gold in the green grass, they flopped about till they were gathered up in pails. Klaus stood, and ran, and stood still again, staring down into the black slime, his cheeks glowing and his eyes beaming. The older boys were saying, "Youngster, you Klaas Hinrich, you'd better hurry home; your father's still in the field, and you know what your mother's like." But he didn't even hear. At last, at twilight, he went toward the high field, sunburned, blowsy, and worn out with play, but happily recalling in a state of beautiful peacefulness all the images of the day. When he came near home he started, woke up from his dreams, and turned pale with fear, for his mother was coming to meet him, usually with the fire-tongs, crying, "I'll drive the Baas out of you, do you hear? You're the very worst one!" And so, with many a hard blow, she drove him into the house. Yet he had certainly not bought it too dearly — for what a time he had had!

Soon the limits of the fields became too small for him and his friends, and they travelled over field and heath to the wood, where they found everything new and wonderful; the tall broom, the brook running along beside the roots of the young birches, a bright bird in the bushes that they had never seen before, the huts of the peat-diggers, and a snake crawling along the bank. And as they walked along the edge of the wood, they spied a village they had never seen before, and of which they didn't even know the name. Standing on the bank and looking over toward it, they began a lively discussion, about which house was most likely to be the school, and whether there were many big boys there, and whether they shouldn't go nearer. And then behold, the big boys and the dogs came straight out toward them, and from a distance there was a great quarrel back and forth. Then they set off for home, hurling stones and large words behind them as they ran. And Klaus, with every sense strained, and with his head full

of being arrested, overtaken, and captured, of escaping through the airhole and of being ransomed, at last, after passing through a thousand dangers, finally reached the boundaries of the home field, where he camped on his last rampart, quite sated with adventure. The returning Columbus could not have been more so.

After this autumn came the winter again, with long weeks of clear frost. The first thing in the dark winter mornings they put on their skates and skated along the streets to school, no matter how rough it was. And when they got there they kept on their skates, scratching up the floor completely. They went directly from the school yard down to the river, where they sped to and fro over the wide stretches covered with snow, chased by the cold east wind, which had full sweep over the field, and skating now on clear, now on snow-covered ice, past farms, past villages, until they came nearer and nearer and still nearer the tall dike that lay so very far away. And finally they reached it. Then clambering ashore, they climbed the wall with difficulty, and went on down to the ships which lay in winter quarters in the little harbor below the dike. They climbed around on them for a while, looking out far and wide upon the great broken fields of ice, and far, far out upon the great stream in which the icebergs were slowly driving seaward.

Then they turned back, and oh, how the cold sharp wind struck against them! How their cheeks and hands glowed! How dazzled their eyes were! How stiff and tired their legs! How the stars came out and sparkled in the dark blue sky! They must be very careful not to stumble; a hole in the skin wouldn't hurt anything,—it would heal without a doctor and without expense,—but for a hole in their stockings there would be a whipping to pay. What a crackling out there on the ice! Listen—how far and clear it sounds through the night! What a rumbling underneath! Heaven only knows what's under it! Are those lights over there the lights of our village? Yes, they really are—thank heaven, we're home! Wasn't that fine! That light is the light in the room—oh, heavens,

now there's something else to be thinking of! Honestly, I'll never come back so late again! He slid up to the kitchen window, where Lotte was standing alone, on the lookout. "Come in quick, you rascal," she says. "Our neighbor's here. Mother's going to make her a new dress. I've told them you were in bed already. Hurry in, quick."

Spring and summer came again, a summer full, as it seemed to him later, only of silent golden days. Among his companions he continued to stand out strongly; and although he was younger than they, he always took the lead on account of his greater energy and lordliness. The days were passed at school and in work in the field; but, oh, those evenings of happy, excited play, when he went down the street to find the boys sitting waiting on the old low wall under the tall dark poplars beside the church. Then they proceeded to divide the world among them, he always demanding Russia, and always getting it. What an immense realm his was, taking in all the land north of the church clear up to the broad meadow, over which the evening mist was already dense. How mighty he was and how despotic a ruler! How he stormed along with his four, nay, five regiments of Cossacks out of the mist and darkness, over the low wall covered with its round stones, over the sunken graves, and at last, with a wild shout, toward Pastor Jensen's old open vault, in which the enemy, with their wives and children, were making their last stand! How the girls shrieked when they saw his zeal and the fire in his eye! Even Lotte's bright little face showed real horror for just a moment; and Liese Lachmann, who was naturally flighty and irrepressible, shrieked as if she were possessed.

Gradually, as they played thus, the darkness came on. And then they sat silent and weary on the low wall, while the evening colors grew more sombre, and all the open places grew bigger, and the many dark bushes, the trees, the corners, and the old poplars grew darker still. The shadow cast by Pastor Jensen's vault stood like a great

black gate, and over the graves sounded the clear voices of the girls calling a boy's name. Suddenly some one declared that a light had just gleamed in the high church windows, just as if there were a light on the altar, and they all sat very still looking over toward it. And their eyes never saw so far as they saw then in that twilight, never saw so clearly as they saw in that darkness.

Gradually the lights came out in the streets. Here and there from the houses they heard their mothers calling. Klaus, however, simply couldn't go home now, when it was all so wonderful, and so he was almost always too late. Several times, when they carried on their play after it grew dark, his mother pulled him off his noble steed before the very eyes of his Cossack regiments. His cheeks were glowing and his eyes gleaming brightly, when suddenly he caught sight of her coming with the tongs. He looked confusedly around him and then leaped toward home to escape her.

In the autumn Peter had to go into the confirmation class. With his fingers in his ears, he sprawled halfway over the table, repeating texts and verses innumerable between his groans. They made him recite them constantly, but that didn't help much either. Another cross was that he had to comply with the old custom of writing a bit of verse, for memory's sake, in all his comrades' albums. Growling and scolding, and sometimes even crying with rage, he wrote the same thing in every book:—

Roses, tulips, pinks may fade,  
Every flower that blooms may fade,  
My love fadeth not.

He was the unhappiest fellow that ever lived, he declared, and if he ever got rid of school he would never take hold of a pen again.

The weather was bad, and Klaus and Lotte, finding time heavy on their hands, often wished they had a book to read. Once, when they were in the middle of a very lively discussion, their mother came in and asked curtly what business they had with books.

“Well,” said their father, “books don’t mean much to Peter, and Lotte is just a girl, but Klaus has a good head, and he’s got the inclination, too.”

Antje Baas laughed scornfully. “He!” she said, “*he* knows how to play. He can do that—and he can’t do anything else. He’ll be exactly what you are,—a day laborer.”

One morning several weeks later his mother woke him long before it was light to send him with the coffee into the field where his father had been cutting beans all night for his employer.

“Just be careful not to spill that coffee,” she said in her short, jerky way as she sent him off. Klaus had never been out alone in quite so dark a dawn, and he was a good deal frightened, but he went on and on, peering over the dark fields, standing still now and then to look behind him, holding his breath and trembling violently whenever he heard a crow caw or a chain strike against a horseshoe, and prepared for all kinds of horrors. If he were only there!

Suddenly he heard swift steps behind him. Terror-stricken, he turned around, to see a huge strange form bearing uncertainly down on him through the dark mist, and calling loudly.

He put the pot of coffee down in the grass and ran as fast as he could, but the monster was swifter than he. What heavy footsteps—regular elephant feet! What a tremendous mouth! What an unearthly voice! His blood sucked out! Gobbled up alive! Nothing left of him but white bones, which father and Lotte would find and weep over! Great horror through the whole country!

Suddenly he heard the spectre call his name, and he recognized the voice of his mother. His mother! She had hurried after him to give him the bread which she had forgot. She tried to shake out the terror that still showed in his face, and when she saw that it wouldn’t yield, she stroked his head hastily, saying loudly and angrily, though with a certain gentleness, too: “You’re a great Cossack general, you are! You’re just the same



kind of a hero your father is." Then she took his hand and led him on.

✓ Soon they saw the great dark beanfield, covered with short black sheaves, and in the distance the father and his comrades at work. As they came nearer, the men stopped working, and pulling on their coats, sat down in a circle on the sheaves they had just cut.

As the morning wind came up, it grew bitter cold. Klaus plunged his hands deep in his coat pockets and pressed his knees close together, looking up at his father, who, wet to the knees, dead sleepy, and exhausted from the hard night's work, was eating his bread with his black hands.

They ate for a while in silence. Then the father said: "We've been talking about Hamburg all night, Antje. It's being built up immensely, house after house, and people there are earning four marks a day. What would you say to our going? Timmerman has a cousin living there who works in a coal yard, and his boy goes to the high school. If we were getting along here, I'd say we'd better stay right here. But as it is, why should we? Who can tell whether we might not get along better there, or whether our children mightn't, anyway?"

Antje Baas knew Hamburg only from hearsay. Reckoning that she might make more there with her sewing, and that the children might in some way get up in the world a little, she said bluntly, "You'll never get us along very fast — you're a Baas, once and for all."

Jan Baas laughed, saying to the men, "That just means she isn't against it."

Klaus Hinrich forgot the severe cold, sitting open-mouthed and wide-eyed on the wet sheaves, and seeing horses and golden armor, brilliance and wonder. "Father!" he cried in a low excited voice, "come! right away! let's go there!"

Antje Baas, looking at him, saw straight through him. "I know well enough what's moving *you*," she said in angry contempt. "Your father shall stay here, and so shall you. I won't be the laughing-stock of all Hamburg on your account."

### CHAPTER III

THE old railway station near the Kloostertor in Hamburg — is there a citizen of Hamburg anywhere that does not cherish its image, vividly recalling the hideous untidiness of its rooms, its worn floors and its sunken sills, its sagging doors and its hanging shutters? What throngs, nay, hosts, of people have passed through that station, many of them right happily, — students from the north, let us say, bound for Jena and Heidelberg, or young girls, daughters of the well-to-do, off to see the wonders of the world — Berlin, or the Alps, or perhaps even Italy; through it have passed, too, many of the placidly successful, bound on quiet business or comfortable recreation. And yet — the number of these is small enough, compared with hundreds of thousands of simple folk who have passed along its dirty, blackened walls and stepped over its worn thresholds for a little rest. Loaded down with bag and baggage, they have stood and sat in and around the ugly place, seeing, wide-eyed, images of the home they have left and visions of the unknown future. Who can imagine the pictures that these great throngs saw as they sat there? Over these sunken thresholds have trod men from Prussia, from Saxony, from Holstein; the best men in Mecklenburg have passed through here twice; Poles and Jews and Slavs without number, all breaking away with difficulty from the home land, all called forth first by the cry, “Land! Here there is land!” and secondly by the call of the world’s commerce, into the mad chase of which we slow, silent country people are now being surely drawn.

Jan Baas had gone ahead to look for the friend that was to take them to the house that they had rented, and his wife and Lotte, each leading one of the little ones, had

gone to get a drink. Peter, who had not wanted to come to Hamburg with them, had stayed behind and gone into service with the farmer on whose fields his father and grandfather had both worked. So only Klaus was standing guard by the two great bundles done up in bedding beside the wall. He sat there between the two big plump packs on a little pile of old yellow books—an old lot of classics which a student cousin had presented to his mother when she was young, and which she had always kept under lock and key. She hadn't been able to tuck them in the bundles anywhere. And as he sat there, Klaus gazed at the procession passing by, wagon after wagon.

Several porters, standing around, saw Klaus and came up to him. One of them, attracted by the way the boy was gazing spellbound out into the new world, said, "Well, now, you've got a good place there, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Klaus, with the grave wisdom of the country boy, "I've got a good place here."

They went on joking. "Well, what kind of books are those you're sitting on?"

"Grand books," said Klaus, gravely, as if he were talking of fine big horses.

"Then you're going to be a scholar, are you?"

"Perhaps," said Klaus, "if I have brains enough," looking at them solemnly.

"What's your father?"

"A laborer."

One sympathetic fellow patted him on the head, and said, "Well, then, you're to be a senator, do you hear?"

Klaus nodded slowly again, and they went off smiling.

Then his mother and Lotte came back, turned over the two bundles and sat down on them, each taking one of the youngsters on her lap. Klaus sat between them, still on the books.

Antje Baas didn't at all like sitting there in full view of so many passers-by, many of whom cast curious glances at them. She looked straight ahead of her, now and then muttering resentfully at her husband, the rascal, who

hadn't come back. In her anger and weariness she began to pinch little Hanna's nose up and down again and again.

Two well-dressed, elderly men, who were standing there waiting for the train, kept looking at them especially. One of them came nearer to ask curiously why she was doing that. She drew herself up and answered angrily: "What business is that of yours? You take care of your own nose!" The man drew back with an embarrassed smile.

Then the other one came up kindly and said: "I'm glad you shut him up that way. Why does he busy himself with other people's noses? Now won't you let *me* give your little boy sitting there on the books five groschen?"

With a gesture of refusal, Antje Baas answered shortly: "Do you take us for beggars? Keep your money. Maybe you need it more than we do." The little fellow on the books also said, with a shake of his head, "We never take presents."

So he too went off.

Finally Jan Baas came around the corner only to say that the friend was nowhere to be seen.

"That's just what I expected," said Antje. "It always happens that way when you manage anything. Get up — we'll start off without him."

She took hold of the youngsters more firmly and started out. Behind her came Lotte, holding little Hanna. Then came the father, with a bundle under each arm. Last of all came Klaus with the books, which he held now in one arm, now in the other, or at times, more comfortably, in front of him. He stared curiously on all sides, stood still to look around him, and then caught up to the bundles by a short little trot.

It appeared that they should have got out of the train sooner. They had to ask a lot of questions, and it was a long way back. They reached the Alsterdamm, and went along the Jungfernstieg toward the Rathausmarkt. There Jan Baas stood still under the trees — the Kaiser monument was not there then — turned deliberately around with his bundles, and gazed out over the whole

throng of men. It was just time for the opening of the Exchange, and both sides of the court-house were black with men passing to and fro. "Klaus," said Jan, "just look at those men. Why, not one of them has a spade or a tool or a horse, or anything like that — they all seem to be got up just as human beings, — but we can't live just off of folks, can we?"

Klaus Baas looked out over the pile of books in front of his chest. "Why, do you know, father, they're all keeping Sunday."

Jan Baas wasn't so sure. "They would be walking more slowly," he was inclined to think. "Just look! they're fairly stepping on each other's heels. They are certainly out on business."

Klaus thought so too, now. "Do you know, father," he said, "do you know what I think? They are going to the harbor, or else coming from it, and they have their goods stored there."

Jan Baas shook his head, astounded, turned slowly around and walked on, followed by Klaus.

They went along up the Alter Steinweg, till they came to the Grossneumarkt. There, weary with walking and carrying heavy bundles, and speechless at the houses and people, they had to sit down and rest a while beside the tables and booths of the hustling venders. Jan Baas went ahead to find the street and the house.

While Klaus was sitting there on his books, he saw a boy about his own age with a pointed little brown face, in disreputable old clothes, standing at one of the tables, comfortably chatting with a vender. Happening to turn around and see Klaus sitting there, he came over. He was distinctly bow-legged, and he had his hands stuck in his jacket, which was torn halfway up.

"Well, and where do you want to go?" he asked patronizingly.

"We're looking for our house," answered Klaus.

Touching the books with the tip of his worn old shoe, the boy said, "What are you going to do with that truck?"

Klaus renounced the whole classic world, as he answered indifferently, "Oh, we had them at home, so I brought them along."

The boy nodded toward a table at the side, on which heaps of old books were lying. "Get rid of them there," he said.

The country boy gravely shook his head. "We haven't anything to sell," he said.

The boy liked Klaus's cool, businesslike air, which was quite as impressive as his own street experience. "What's your name?" he asked.

"My name is Klaus Hinrich Baas," said Klaus, clearly and circumstantially.

"Well," said his brown-checked acquaintance, a little puzzled at Klaus's seriousness and dignity, "mine is Kalli Dau. We have a flower shop over there — see it? there beside the coal yards. There's nothing the matter with my family. My stepfather is a regular bum, and my mother is always buying herself silk waists."

All this terrified Klaus Baas, but he managed to hide it, and said gravely and hesitatingly: "This is my family here. We're going to live on the corner of Rademachersgang — do you know where that is?"

"Yes, up there where we live," said Kalli Dau, with his one-sided nod. And with that he turned back to his friend the vender.

His father came back, and they started off again, his mother again in the lead. In a little while she stopped to look up at the number of a certain house, and then leaned forward and peered into the dark door. She half turned to Lotte, and said sharply, "I guess they only clean here once a week." Then, with a hasty motion, she threw back her head, as if to collect all the courage and defiance she possessed, and went into the dark entry.

Next morning their mother sent them straight off to school. "You be sure to behave now," she said as they went off, raising her hand threateningly. They went down the two flights of steps, and started off up the street, Lotte ahead. There came a cab! Why did the

coachman wear such a funny hat? And there stood a policeman — what was he doing standing there? Wasn't everybody going quietly about his business? There came a postman — mercy, how many steps he had to climb! That was a striking fellow in the fur cap and strange high boots walking proudly along, — now where could he have come from? But that man, the one behind him, why, he might be a farmer from home. Klaus had to stand still to look at both of them. Now, on again! He ran into a fat old woman, spilling the groceries she was carrying. She gave a startled shriek, and said, "You must be from the country, boy! Can't you see people coming?"

And in school there were such crowds and crowds of children — what a lot of different faces! And what a queer way of talking some of them had! And no one concerned himself about him, Klaus Baas. In came the teacher, a tall thin man in high, tight shiny boots — oh, what boots! There had been nothing like them in the village. Klaus sat straight and still, wondering why the teacher didn't take over his knee a whole row of rascals, who were either purposely making a noise with their slates, or poking each other in the ribs with their pencils. Klaus was terribly excited, and was constantly expecting a dreadful scene to occur at any moment. He tried by bright looks and quick answers to divert the teacher's attention. The teacher soon noticed and commended him. "You've had a good teacher in your home village, and you've paid good attention, too," he said. That pleased Klaus, and it also laid him under an obligation. He continued to pay attention, to look up brightly, and to answer quickly.

At recess time, when they all trooped down the steps into the little playground, where they stood still or whirled in and out in little groups, Klaus stood up by the wall, quite confused by the sight of the running, whirling crowd. Five or six of them surrounded him, and said, "Come on, now, make some more o' them bright eyes!" They didn't harm him, however.

When school was out, Kalli Dau attached himself to Klaus with a proposition: "What are you going home for already? Come along!"

Klaus was afraid of his mother's scolding and whipping. The entire neighborhood of St. Pauli, about which she had heard some things she didn't like, she had condemned utterly, absolutely forbidding him, once and for all, to go there. She had held up the old tongs, and said, in her threatening way, "You be careful, now, to keep away from St. Pauli, or I'll beat the life out of you." But the rest of the city was not expressly forbidden, and his desire for the new life was tremendous. So away he went with Kalli Dau — always lagging behind a little, like a prudent countryman.

Kalli Dau had friends all along the line — on the Alter Steinweg, a woman standing in front of a cellar full of potatoes, cabbages, and beets; in the Grossneumarkt, the venders, or a drunken lout standing in front of a pothouse on the square. Hungry, bow-legged, in his second-hand clothes, he stopped to talk to all these people; and what he said was so suitable, so sensible, and so positive that they did not seem to be at all surprised to be talked to so by a little bow-legged fellow like him, and answered him in his own serious way.

He had connections with the policemen, too, though these were not always peaceable. If it was a friend, Kalli Dau went up to him and struck up a conversation; indeed, with one fat, easy-going fellow he had established an exchange in stamps and old copper coins. Sometimes, however, it was a tall thin one, "a snappy chap," as Kalli said. If one like this were on duty, Kalli curved around him, laid his books on the ground, bent almost double, and stared through his sad little bow-legs at the hated enemy. And when the policeman, with the deliberate and impressive air of his kind, came toward him, Kalli straightened up, walked on a little way, and then fell into the same marvellous attitude again, never concerning himself at all when a man sometimes stood still in amazement to look at him, or when a young woman, suddenly spying the low,



twisted figure in front of her, cried out in fright. Klaus Baas, who had an exaggerated respect for conventional behavior, implored him to leave off this masterpiece, but he couldn't make him do it.

Finally they came to the flower shop, in front of which Kalli Dau's oldest brother Jonni, a thin, loose-jointed sort of clown, was lounging lazily, his pipe in his mouth, in the winter sunshine. Inside, his mother was bustling around among the plants and flower pots, while her husband, in the dark room adjoining, was weaving wreaths with a young girl who was continually giggling. The mother, a thin, dark woman, who always wore a gay red or blue silk waist, was always chatting volubly with some one, a customer or a neighbor. She gave Klaus a friendly word, too, and handed him a little bunch of violets to take to his mother. And Klaus thought how fine it would be if *she* were only his mother. And yet — a few days later, when he was standing outside the shop door again, he heard her roughly scolding away at her husband, who was weaving mourning wreaths in the dark room. As her East Prussian dialect was strange to Klaus, he couldn't entirely make out what she was saying, but he felt that it was something pretty bad. What awful talk! and how red and furiously angry her face was! Then hark to her husband, reproaching her for letting the children go ragged and hungry. No — no a thousand times! Oh, how different, thought Klaus, how different his mother was! To be sure, she scolded hard, and laid on the tongs pretty hard, — but after all, how much better! Yes, and she was so careful; and looked after everything! Klaus drew back from the shop door and slipped around the corner toward home.

He found his mother looking grave, as usual, sitting in her clean, close-fitting dress, at the new sewing machine she had bought. She was doing her first piece of outside work — confided to her by the cabinet-maker's wife on the floor below. At home she had helped in the fields almost all the year round, but here she wanted to get to work at her old trade in earnest.

Lotte went hither and thither, always busy looking after the household. All the time she was not at school it was "Lotte!" here and "Lotte!" there, from early in the morning until evening. Sometimes she stood by her mother, helping to thread needles or to baste; sometimes she was at the stove in the kitchen; sometimes she was needed by one of the little ones playing quietly on the window-seat; sometimes she had to sew on a button that Klaus was about to lose. And she was always kind and sweet, just as he remembered her from his earliest days, when she had knelt before him at the little white gate.

At last she was free to get at her own work. She sat at her tasks, bending her bright yellow head till the braids fell forward beside her slate. One of the pretty bright refractory locks was always hanging down over her eyes, and she was continually brushing it aside, and deftly pushing it behind her ear. She was very conscientious in her work, and she had a good head, but she did not get along as quickly in the new school work as Klaus did, so that he had to help her every evening. Often when, in asking questions or listening, she raised her bright little face, with its infinite purity and fine true intelligence, he didn't hear at all what she was saying, but sat open-mouthed, looking at her with kindly eyes, as if he were seeing and expecting something marvellous. He felt and greatly loved in her what he missed in his mother — a wise and gentle womanliness.

He was so thoroughly in accord with Lotte that they fairly had the same thoughts, the same loves, and the same secret desires. When they had done their lessons and together had put the beans in the pan and set them on to cook, and then had set the table, they crept to the window, very quietly, so that their mother would not notice, and looked out over the court as it grew dark. Just opposite rose the great high black wall of the next house. The lower part of it was faintly lighted up by a pale gleam from the gateway, and through this they could see soft loose snowflakes slowly floating down. And they could see nothing else. When they had stood there

for a while, Lotte always said softly, "Oh, I see — I see —"

And he answered, just as softly, "What do you see?"

With her head pressed against the pane, she gazed out, wide-eyed. "I see all the boys — gliding by on skates — wait a minute — yes, now I see them very distinctly; they're hurrying along the Süderstrom, and soon they reach the bridge at the sheep path."

"How many of them are there?"

"Just wait till I see!" Then in a sure little voice she named them all over. "And now," she went on, "it's beginning to snow — and Klaus Nickels has lost his skate. They all stand still and scold him because it happens so often."

"Are they still skating?" he questioned softly; "don't they ever go on shore?"

"Just wait — not yet — yes, they do. Now they are going up to the cove — there where the shore is so high up, you remember? It is awfully slippery, and they keep sliding down — Fritz Hollunder is the first one up."

She was silent a moment, listening to the faint splashing of the wet snow against the window. Then he said softly, "Oh, I see — I see —"

"What do you see?" said Lotte.

"We are lying on the heath near Gudersdorf, and looking out over the Elbe — you and I and Klaus von der Wisch and Liese Lachmann."

"Is she with us?" said Lotte, in amazement. "Why, she would be too lazy."

"Yes," he said, "but she's really there, lying beside Klaus von der Wisch. There aren't any others there. And you tell Liese Lachmann that part of the hem of her dress is out and that it's all dirty again, and you scold her because she's so untidy. And I keep teasing Klaus von der Wisch, and hit him in the face with heather."

"Well, how does he take that? Do you keep on hitting?"

“Yes — no — he gets up — and now I knock him down, and now he gets really furious.”

“Yes,” said Lotte, “that’s the way he always did. Does he kick at you?”

“Yes, but you catch hold of his sleeve and pull him back. He rages like a bull and stamps his foot — but he doesn’t do anything else to me.”

“That’s good,” said Lotte, taking a deep breath.

They were quiet again, gazing with big silent eyes out into the darkness. Softly Lotte began again, “I see — oh, I see —”

“What do you see?”

“We’re playing in the churchyard.”

“Can you see us plainly?”

She shook her head. “It’s so dark that we can’t see Pastor Jensen’s grave any longer. You boys are all sitting on the wall telling war stories. Now Anna Tramm and Liese Lachmann and I come out from the thick poplar — you know, that one in the corner by the narrow walk — and we make you boys mad.”

“What do you say?”

“Oh, you know — we say the rhymes we made up about you —

Klaus Baas  
Mach Spass,

and

Fritz Hollunder  
Krup under.

Now Fritz Hollunder is running up behind me — he runs past Liese Lachmann, who stands there and wouldn’t mind being caught, and he tries to catch me — around the tree — down the little walk — I don’t think he’ll get me — he almost falls down. Then I run toward the pillar, you know — behind the altar, where it’s always so dark. He has lost me, and stands looking with all his eyes, as if I had flown inside the wall — then I have to laugh out loud and he gets me — and he holds me pretty tight, but not too hard.”

Klaus, becoming jealous, said, "Fritz Hollunder always has a big part in all your stories."

"Oh, well, just because he was the quickest," she said, pressing her little head against the pane.

"But that isn't true," said Klaus. "I was the quickest."

"You!" she said slowly, in soft surprise. "Why, but you are my brother."

As they stood there making their dream pictures, they heard the outer door open and their father take off his heavy boots and set his tin dinnerpail on the table. Then he appeared at the kitchen door, calling in his loud kindly voice, "Good evening, everybody!"

Lotte lighted the old lamp over the fireplace. It was the same lamp that had furnished light for the mother's great-grandparents in the lonely field,—a little open whale-oil lamp. Over its flat edge hung the wick, which burned under protest, keeping up a continual spirting and sputtering. It was a mean, uncertain little light, but the mother thought that "old Sara," as she called it, was cheaper than any other lamp would be.

Then they all had supper—like hundreds of thousands of other families all over broad Germany in the winter. And they had it off a gay tablecloth, using forks with horn handles and steel tines. In the centre of the table stood the one iron pan, full of baked beans or dumplings. As they ate, each one told of anything new he had seen, or of anything old that had struck him in a new way. The father told of his work at pulling down old houses; Lotte told about school and about the little ones; Klaus told about Kalli Dau, and about how gay Kalli's mother's waist was, and about the past of the great city, of which he had heard at school. And little tow-headed Hanna told about what she had seen out the window. Their father took everything, even little Hanna's talk, quite seriously, and talked to them as if they were all good friends together. Then the mother, who had been busy helping the little ones, and had hitherto said nothing, got provoked, and said to Klaus,—because he talked the most

vigorously and emphatically, — “I used to think that you might have a little more sense than your father, but you are a perfect child, just like him. I can’t listen to your gabble any longer.”

An hour later, he lay in bed in the little pitch dark room with Lotte beside him. He lay there listening to the loud scolding of the drunken mason who lived on the other side of the wall, and who was continually quarrelling with his wife — who, indeed, was not his wife at all. Klaus had a secret dread that the mason, in his fury, might break through the wall, or shoot through it with his pistol. Klaus positively saw the wall bend in and break, saw the bullet coming through, and even felt the pain where it struck him in the breast. But he felt in honor bound not to tell all this to Lotte. She lay there quietly, raising her head now and then to see if he was well covered up, and asked him whether she mightn’t build a dog-kennel now — that is, lie over on her back with her knees well drawn up. She lay there beside him, and he, hearing her gentle breathing and feeling her hair against his cheek, felt more secure.

## CHAPTER IV

Two weeks later very cold snowy weather set in — those were the times of snowy, severe winters. Then Klaus made his first expedition of any length.

On a large open place on the way to Eimsbüttel — it was built up long ago — between heaps of rubbish, piles of old lumber, and little sheds, there was a fair-sized stretch of water, solidly frozen over. Everything around, ice, wood, rubbish, and huts, was covered with a fresh fall of snow, and shone clean and white in the crisp winter air.

All the children from the tall houses and the network of narrow streets in the Neustadt had flocked here by hundreds, just as all the flies in a room flock to a sugar-bowl. In a minute they had covered the pond, and had converted it and the sloping slippery stretch leading to it into a toboggan slide. Some had on skates; others had regular little sleds on which they sat astride, often holding little brothers or sisters in front of them. Many of them, with a child's quick inventiveness, had devised fearful and wonderful substitutes—simply a board, or a piece of strong pasteboard; two or three were sitting on iron pans which they had abstracted from their mothers; and some absolutely reckless ones, who weren't thinking of the morrow, were sacrificing shirts, seats of trousers, and finally their skins.

On the day that Klaus discovered this playground, he was there alone with Kalli Dau. He tumbled around at a great rate, got to feeling a little more assured among all these strange people, and for the first time felt happy and at home. He told them all about it at supper with great enthusiasm, and said they must all be sure to go there the

next afternoon. Their mother seemed to be willing for him and Lotte to go, but flatly forbade the little ones. They would ruin their clothes, she said, get run over, and goodness knows what else. They didn't dare to contradict her.

When Klaus and Lotte set out the next afternoon, the little ones cried. Not daring to ask their mother about the little ones again, they went thoughtfully down the stairs, both thinking the same thing: What fun the two little ones would have had with the snow and ice at home in Heisterberg! And now they were sitting upstairs just looking out at the wall.

When they were halfway down the steps Lotte suddenly put her head down on the banister and cried bitterly. Klaus stood there sadly, not knowing what to do, but just as much vexed as she that it couldn't be managed. But when she raised her head and, sobbing quietly, went back up the stairs again, he followed her, wondering anxiously how it would turn out.

Lotte went to the door of the room where her mother was standing beside the machine with a garment in her hand. Very quietly, and with just a touch of roguishness in her voice, with much the same manner, indeed, that her father used in speaking to her mother, Lotte said that if she could only take the children with her, she would look after them just as well as she knew how.

Though Lotte's tone certainly came from the best intention in the world, even if it did perhaps strike the wrong note, it cut her mother like a whip. She struck Lotte sharply.

Lotte kept calm — just as her father did — and bore the blows, raising her arm a little to ward them off. Finally her mother turned away — perhaps on account of the quiet clearness of Lotte's eyes, which showed a self-possession that her own lacked — and went into the bedroom.

Then Lotte knelt down in front of the little ones, put on their heavy coats and, almost blinded with her tears, fumbled in the drawer for their mufflers, which she tied around their heads and necks. Her breast was heaving



violently all the time. Then they all went down the stairs crying. Klaus didn't dare to look at Lotte, for one doesn't like to look a dishonored man in the face, even if the dishonor is unjust.

He buckled on the skates which he had brought with him from Heisterberg, and as usual was soon entirely absorbed in play. At times, however, he looked over at her, in her rather short frock, long ago outgrown. She was bending over, holding one of the little ones in front of her as she slid down hill, her bright braid, with its two shades of yellow, hanging down over her hot little cheek.

Suddenly, when they were all at the very height of their play, they heard confused voices. Looking up, they saw a lot of boys talking excitedly to a big, oldish man who was approaching the pond. As he walked he swung his arms, to frighten away the groups of children, and looked out over the pond. He had the red, heavy face of a drunkard. Klaus ran up, and heard that he was the tenant of the place, and wanted the children to get out. When several of the big boys said, "He's dead drunk, so we ought to go," he went away and came back with a policeman, a good, kindly fellow. He put in a good word for the children, but he couldn't do anything with the man, and so he calmly did his duty and cleared the place.

The children lingered in groups around the boards that surrounded their paradise. When they saw that it was of no use, they started home, casting longing glances back at the open lot. In a long, straggling procession they went back to the high houses which, in the dull gray evening glow, stood huddled on the field in the distance ahead of them like a herd of huge plump cattle.

The little ones didn't want to go home so soon, and Lotte herself wasn't eager to meet her mother; they weren't allowed to play in the court, so they stayed in the draughty passageway and played together there. After a little while Klaus saw that Lotte's eyes were sunken, and that she was trembling with cold. He insisted that they should all go in.

In the night his mother awakened him. Scantly clad,

she was standing beside the bed, saying, "How in the world can you lie there sleeping now?" Then he heard a confused voice beside him saying, "Where can Hanna's muffler be? Oughtn't it to be here? I must get up and hunt it; but first I'll get supper. Quick! quick! I hear father coming already. Get up quick, you lazy old girl!" Klaus sprang up in horror, got dressed, and looked on helplessly while his mother hurried to and fro with cold cloths. His father came, too, and looked down on Lotte in mute distress.

In the morning, on his way to work, his father left a call for the doctor. He declared it inflammation of the brain—a bad case of it. He came every day, but he could do nothing. The sick girl lay there on her back with her eyes closed, totally unconscious most of the time, and muttering to herself low and pitifully. And day and night her mother went to and fro continually.

Klaus thought a good deal about his mother's not sleeping; he saw her asleep just once, when she was kneeling beside Lotte's bed. But he didn't have courage enough to ask her to leave him with Lotte while she took a nap, because he was afraid of Lotte now. She looked so strange and unnatural, and every once in a while her face was distorted so that it looked like an old woman's. With big terrified eyes he looked at her from the doorway, and then went over to the window and stood looking down on the empty court.

As they had noticed that the sick girl shuddered at every noise, Klaus, without being told, took the little ones upstairs where there was an empty flat, and played with them there on the stairs. Two puny youngsters, who lived on the floor above that, joined them. It was still bitter cold, and they nearly froze in their sorry play in such a tiny place; so Klaus had to think up all kinds of ways to keep them moving. When the sun came out a little they all sat in a little bunch in the farthest corner of the windowsill, which the beams of the sun reached for only a short time toward evening. Sitting pressed side-wise against the wall, so that they kept each other warm,

they played at guessing just how far the sunbeams would reach this time. Klaus knew perfectly well how far it would come, but he pretended to think it quite possible that it might take a sudden leap forward, like a great white cat. If it got too cold and tiresome, the two sickly little cripples took off their shoes and slid down the banisters agilely in spite of their ugly little bow-legs, and then noiselessly mounted the stairs again. The landlord, coming up toward evening to feed his pigeons, never passed them without scolding at "that everlasting bunch of kids." The two cripples made faces at him behind his back; but Klaus drew the little ones aside and gazed silently in front of him.

Then his father, coming home from work, came up the stairs, putting his heavy feet down carefully. They went silently down to meet him. How tired he looked, and how hard it was for him to walk! He was breathing very hard, and the sweat glistened on his forehead. Oh, what if he too should get sick! Wide-eyed, they all went into the kitchen, and looked up at the mother as she came out of the bedroom. And when they saw the fixed distress in her eyes, they dropped their own, and sat brooding in sorrowful silence, listening to the weary monotonous moaning of the sick girl.

Toward the evening of the ninth day Klaus's mother, who had not had her clothes off at all since the beginning of Lotte's sickness, had sunk into a chair by the hearth, where she had been crying her heart out in secret; and she had fallen asleep. Klaus noticed that the voice from the bedroom did not sound so toneless and pitiful as usual. He went quietly to the door and looked fearfully toward the bed, only dimly lighted by the lamp. Then he went in and closed the door. As he stood there apprehensively, the moaning ceased altogether, and he heard her call softly for her mother. Then he went up to the bed, suddenly losing all his fear, and said gently, "I'm here, Lotte — it's me!"

She opened her eyes a little way. "Where are you?" she said, in a low tired voice.

“Why, here I am,” he said, bending over her; “don’t you see me?”

“I can’t see you!” she said, in a low wail. “I’m blind! Don’t tell the others.”

He threw himself on his knees by the bed, beside himself with grief. “Oh, say, Lotte — ‘I see — I see’ — listen, ‘I see — I see.’”

She listened, tried to open her eyes wide, and said, low and expectantly, “What do you see?” and waited.

He looked, and saw that her eyes were dull and grayish, like an old woman’s. He dropped his head on his arm and answered desperately, “I don’t see anything at all.”

“Neither do I,” she said in a low voice. She lay very still while he cried there beside her. Then, as if she had reached a clear and calm conclusion after thinking hard, she said, “I shan’t open my eyes again, and then mother won’t see it.” She tried to say something else, but he was crying so hard that he couldn’t make out anything but the name of Heisterberg.

While he was lying there his father came home, waking his mother as he came in. They both came into the bedroom, and found him lying there, with Lotte moaning in the same old way.

She kept it up all evening — even more wearily than usual. His mother stood there bending over the bed while he and his father sat beside the cold hearth. When it was time to go to bed his mother came to the door and said to his father, in her abrupt way, “You must go to bed. You’ve got to be fresh for your work to-morrow.”

Jan Baas looked around and shook his head, saying, “I can’t listen to her moaning any longer.” Then he went outside and sat down on the stairs. Klaus followed him, and there they sat all night long, hearing her low moans faintly through the wall. He held his father’s hand in his, and tried to comfort him by telling him quietly about all kinds of nice things that were going to happen some day — when Peter would be grown up and earning good wages as a farm hand; and he — he was going to be a teacher and find a place in their old village, and his

father and mother would live with him and be very comfortable. "Then all you'll do'll be just to work a tiny bit in my garden, father. But you haven't been looking very well lately, — what's the matter?"

"It isn't anything much," Jan Baas answered, passing his hand over his eyes. "I was pulling down some rafters and a beam struck me in the side. And ever since then the place has been hurting me. But you mustn't say anything to your mother about it."

Klaus caught the discouraged tone in his father's voice, usually so full and hearty. He sat there pondering deeply. He thought of a sentence he had just had in his reader at school. "Thereupon great misfortune came upon the family, and direst poverty." If his father got sick — well, then they would have great misfortune and direst poverty. He meditated on that word poor — poor. At home he had heard people say that this or that family was poor; and he had once been in a house where poor people lived. A feeling of hunger and cold and shame crept over him now, and he clasped his father's hand tighter. The drunken mason came muttering and stumbling up the steps. Then the coal-heaver came downstairs, the pail in his pocket knocking hard against the banisters at every step. Then came the gray light of the morning, and with it came his mother. Two weeks ago her harsh, sober face had still been smooth; now it looked as if it had suddenly been furrowed and ravaged by a dreadful storm.

"She is still now," she said, looking at the two refugees with hard, comfortless eyes. "You can come in."

Then they both broke out crying. Standing by the kitchen window, he cried till he could cry no more. Then his mother sent him to the cabinet-maker's, who had a dark workshop in a court near by. The old fellow, with his long hair and clothing full of sawdust and shavings, listened to the order and then asked indifferently how old his sister might be. When Klaus said that she was thirteen, he showed a little more interest. He took Klaus into the next room, where, among various odds and

ends of furniture, there were several coffins. He measured one of them with his rule, and said to Klaus, "Now show me how tall your sister is."

Klaus showed him how much higher her yellow head had come than his.

"Is she as tall as that?" asked the old man.

"Just about," he answered.

"Well, then," said the old man, peevishly, "that casket won't do. Tell your mother that I'll bring one to-morrow. How about the pay for it?"

"Mother has the money all laid by," said Klaus, quietly.

When he got home, his mother told him that she had sent his father to work, adding, abruptly, "He'll get through the day best that way — and he can't be any help to me; he's too soft-hearted. *You come.*"

Pale as a sheet, he followed her to the bed in the next room and stood behind her, waiting. She bent over and clasped the little dead form with a tenderness so touching that it overcame him. Then she told him gently to take everything off the bed but the mattress. She nodded her head toward a fresh sheet lying on a chair at the side, and he spread it carefully over the mattress. Lotte's head hung over a little, so he held it, and thus they laid her on the clean sheet. Then his mother took off the little slip and washed her with a damp cloth, while he held the brown earthen bowl of water, standing tall and straight as if he were performing a knightly service. They put a clean little slip on her, combed her hair, laid her head down straight, and laid close together the little feet that had flitted so industriously around the house.

Then Klaus went into the sitting-room to help the little ones put in the quiet day — as well as the two that followed. His usually lively spirit saw and grasped nothing that went on around him. He simply sat brooding over mute questionings — where was Lotte now — frozen within that cold, dead body, or in heaven? But where was heaven? Or was she perhaps standing unseen beside the hearth, or in a corner, looking on with eyes "not of this world" at everything they were doing? When any one

spoke to him he sprang up as if he had been waked from a dream. Then he saw that his father was worn and pale, and that whenever his mother came out of the bedroom she tried hard to keep down the emotion that rose in her as she stood beside Lotte's body. Looking at her as she came out another time, he saw that there was going to be another child.

After the burial his soul gradually came back to him, in much the same way that a bird that has been frightened begins to sing again. He left his place between the hearth and the window and went from room to room again, talking with the others, and taking possession again of the house and the people. In the evening, lying on the bed he had made for himself on the floor in the narrow hall, he pondered about where the dead sister might be. And he imagined — for it seemed to him the most natural, the best, and certainly the most likely thing to happen — that she was in the new baby, soon to be born. He imagined that his mother knew it, too, that, indeed, she had perhaps arranged it with Lotte. Otherwise, how could Lotte have died so quietly?

And when, on Christmas Eve, a little girl was born, he never doubted that it was just as he had thought. They had no cradle there, and so he rocked the baby in his arms for hours at a time. He studied its eyes, talked to it softly, calling it by the dead sister's name — which was to be the baby's name, too — and busied himself with it constantly. So he settled the matter to his satisfaction, and consoled himself as happily and as wisely as he could, thus winning the right to be a little gay again.

Then he went out into the streets again, still somewhat quiet, with more restraint in all his movements, and a look of greater maturity in his face. And he took hold again of his interest in the lives and doings of the people around him. To be sure, he hadn't much time, for he had to take over a good deal of Lotte's work; but now and then he could deliver wreaths and bouquets for an hour with Kalli Dau, and get a little excursion besides. In this way they got to the bright streets along the Alster, and to the harbor,

where he could see right in front of him the ships which he had watched in the distance from the windows and wall at home.

Kalli Dau seemed to know everything in Hamburg; or perhaps it would be better to say that all Hamburg seemed to belong to him — and the harbor in particular. It is true that they sometimes got into the wrong place and were sent back; several times, indeed, they thought it well to withdraw in a good deal of haste — a painful situation for Klaus Baas. Generally, however, everything went very well, thanks to the confidence that the forlorn little brown-faced boy in ragged clothes inspired in everybody. On sunshiny days in February, they stood undisturbed on a steamer, watching basket after basket of coal being let down from the derrick on to the wet dirty deck. They went aboard the Chinese ships as if they were on some errand, and fairly ransacked them. They saw the Chinese stokers down in the forecandle playing cards with chips in the red glow from a lamp that burned night and day. In some way or other that didn't cost anything, they got over to Steinwärder, where they persuaded a foreman or overseer to let them go through the shipyards, on the broad floor of which the steel ribs were being bent. They went through the smithy, too, and saw the workers standing before the fires and anvils. They climbed up on the scaffolding, where the riveters were working on the hull, making a noise that could be heard clear across the harbor. They ducked along rather cautiously to avoid running right into the manager — “for that isn't exactly necessary,” said Kalli. They went along the sheds, in among the sacks, casks, bales, and heaps of goods, from inbound and outbound cargoes. Kalli Dau knew almost every kind of goods; he told its name and origin, not at all didactically or with undue importance, but as a matter of course, as if to say, “This all belongs to me.” Klaus Baas followed him cautiously and uncertainly, missing nothing, however. Finally they went over the gangway on board a big South American ship. They made their way through the long passageways and cabins, and got a



present of some oranges from a friendly stewardess in a black dress and a little white cap, who seemed to be an old acquaintance of Kalli's. Kalli got on easy terms with people just as soon as he stood before them, cocking his slight little brown head on one side, and opening his mouth for a comfortable chat.

The country boy did not puzzle himself too much over all that he saw. He was too equable and cool for that; and he was too well acquainted with these different kinds of work, with horse and wagon, at the counter, with the trowel on the scaffolding, with the crane and rigging, to be astounded by all that he saw. He didn't flit hastily from one thing to another; he walked among them slowly and watchfully, rejoicing in this manifold activity as if he were at the theatre watching a play well known to him, indeed, but grown larger and more varied. It often occurred to him that he would like to tell his father or Lotte about something he had just seen, to explain it to them, a bit boastfully, or to ask them some question about it. Then, when he remembered suddenly that his father was silent and downcast, and that Lotte was dead, all these things rose again before his spirit, forcing him to study them once more, to become familiar with them, to form some judgment of them, and then to leave them there in their true and rightful character.

And so he followed Kalli Dau around. Kalli maintained that the delivery of the flowers was altogether his business, and kept for himself the groschen that came in now and then. He kept them under a big broken flower-pot that was turned over to serve as a pedestal for a palm.

"Our family's a rotten lot," he said. "They rob one another whenever they can, especially mother and my brother Jonni. He doesn't do a thing any more but stand around and swill rum. And then there's the awful stuff we have to eat. Do you think that she" — *she* was his mother with Kalli Dau — "would cook for us? Cheating and nastiness are what she lives on. I'm going to sea as soon as I can. She won't let me run off because she thinks I'll make a good worker for her, but I'm going to

bolt." Klaus never went farther than the door of the shop; he saw the groschen disappear under the flower-pot, and then went home.

A break in their friendship occurred several weeks later, because one day Kalli Dau took in the whole of three groschen, and gave Klaus no share of it, although it was all in half-groschen pieces. Then again Klaus simply couldn't endure Kalli Dau's habit of looking through his legs, which Kalli couldn't seem to help. A Jew, a dealer in second-hand shoes in Elbe Strasse, had, Kalli maintained, cheated him on a pair of boots. In order to avenge the imposition, Kalli took up his position opposite the shoe-shop and stared through his legs at the fat dealer, who stood, calmly smoking a cigar, in his doorway, framed and wreathed around by long strings of shoes, never seeing at all the marvellous statue of Kalli Dau. Klaus Baas scolded, and then went away, refusing to wait till anger overcame the shopkeeper. A third reason for the break was that as Klaus came to feel more at home in his new surroundings, his natural inclination to lead and to collect a Cossack regiment came to the fore again.

The host that he rallied wasn't exactly a lordly one. One of them was one of his playmates on the stairs, a short, chunky, bow-legged little chap, minus teeth, wearing a jacket that had gone to the dogs. He had been sent to the country for a few weeks in the summer by some charitable society. And there, like most children, he had dug in the ground, and had observed, to his boundless amazement, that it was possible to keep digging farther and farther down. Finally he got so deep down that only the top of his head could be seen. Now he spent all his time sitting in the sunless court, digging his knife down into the ground, always striking a stone, and always being chased away by the landlord. He got terribly excited at his work, and had a habit of insisting that any spectators that happened to be there should put their hands on his chest to feel how his heart was thumping. Then he told them that a mouse was gnawing at his heart, and that the doctor had said that he would live to be fourteen, and

then die. Klaus didn't quite swallow the mouse story, but he accepted the part about dying, and said that if that were so, the boy ought to give up his digging and come out into the fresh air. The boy gave one more stab with his knife, saw that he had struck the rock again, looked meditatively into the hole, then snapped his knife shut and went along with Klaus.

Then there was another boy, about as tall as Klaus, but better filled out. His appearance wasn't especially prepossessing either. All the time that Klaus knew him, he had a hole about as big as a quarter in the seat of his trousers, a little on one side, out of which his little shirt-tail was always peeping. Every five minutes or so he tucked it in again unconsciously, from a painful sense of neatness that he professed to have. Having come just a year before from a large estate on the Russian border, he was disposed to mistake every well-dressed man for a baron; and he grabbed at his cap every time a fairly good looking carriage came along. But he had brought with him one important asset; he knew how to obey in silence. The third retainer was a pretty, pale fellow, the son of a truckman. He consistently stopped at every corner to see whether his father's wagon might not be coming. He had a great desire to learn, and had a good head; this accounted for his reverence for Klaus Baas, who could answer so quickly in school, and who sometimes helped him. So he followed him. But when he saw his father's wagon coming, he preferred, in spite of the sloppy March weather, to sit up on the wagon beside the little watch-dog. There he sat, clad in the Iceland jacket that his big burly father always kept in the wagon on the chance of meeting him.

It certainly was not a splendid following, but a following it was. And it obeyed him without a word. While these privates talked a great deal and very boastfully together, he, as befitted a general, marched silently ahead, issuing his directions laconically.

On one of their expeditions they were walking toward the harbor, toward evening on a wet day in March.

Looking and listening, as children do, at everything, they went along to the Rosenbrücke, where at that time of day people stand around looking for work for the night. Suddenly Klaus spied a short, brown Southerner, standing alone near the iron railing, apart from the crowd, sharply scanning the harbor. While they were discussing whether the man was a Hungarian or an Italian, and were going closer to him curiously, they saw a plainly dressed, yellow bearded man pass close by the foreigner, as if by chance. At the very instant when the two men almost touched and suddenly recognized each other, the yellow bearded fellow had a shining whistle between his lips and a revolver in his raised hand; in the Southerner's hand gleamed the cold, sharp steel of a knife. The yellow bearded man whistled. "Put that knife away—you see you're done for," he said with a wave of his hand. Another policeman came up. The dagger fell clattering on the pavement. When the man that was arrested had been searching the harbor, his face had been sharp, sharper than the very blade in his hand; now it was flat and relaxed. Standing there as if he were in a bad dream, he let the policeman snap the handcuffs on, and went along with him.

The boys went up through the Rödingsmarkt toward home. The regiment kept conjecturing about the awfulness of the crime that the foreigner might have committed; they were so glad that he had been caught just in time. Klaus walked silently ahead, moved in his innermost soul by all kinds of imaginings about the man.

When they reached the Grossneumarkt, they found several street toughs standing there in front of one of the taverns. One of them, a tall, light, good-looking fellow, though ragged and half drunk, struck up a conversation with them, in the way peculiar to his kind, most of whom are children all their lives. The truckman's little son answered, and told them what they had just seen. Klaus held back—for the time. But a few minutes later he was leaning up against the wall telling the little circle of toughs, who crowded around him, how this Italian,

somewhere near Milan, had killed his friend in a fit of sudden rage — while they were drinking — Klaus had once seen a picture of an Italian wineshop — how he had fled that same night — up the river, over the Alps, hiding by day and travelling by night, until he reached Hamburg; here he had already arranged with a countryman, a sailor, to go on board to-night — far over the sea — to freedom. Then at the very last moment — his friend was just coming for him with the boat, indeed, he had even seen it coming — he had had the most frightful and horrible misfortune; he had been recognized and arrested. Klaus told the story with gleaming eyes and moving gestures, painting all the emotions in the fugitive's soul. The toughs, like the children they were, treated him just like an equal, and raised a contention with him about the story. The tall light fellow, especially, capriciously took the opposite side, just for fun. At this Klaus, growing more spirited, rose to general conclusions of great wisdom, and set forth distinctly the view that it was not right to persecute criminals that were fleeing from the country; their bad conscience and their homesickness were torment enough. He added by way of confirmation that he had read a good deal about this subject, and had thought about it even more, and — well — he had had a good deal of experience himself.

So the battle of words went on, back and forth. The regiment stood looking on, amazed at their usually taciturn leader. At last the tall light fellow called Klaus “an honorable and clever fellow,” and solemnly invited him, offering his hand and lifting his hat, to drink a glass of kummel with him. Then Klaus woke up, became dazed and confused, and said that he had to go home. He started at once.

When he got home he was very quiet, saying nothing at all of his adventure. It happened that this was the first night he had slept again in the same place in the room and the same place in the bed that he had used to sleep in with Lotte. Little light-haired Hanna lay beside him now. In her gentle way she told him a little bit

about what she had been doing all day, and then fell asleep. He lay wide awake thinking, "Now if Lotte were lying beside me she would say, 'Tell a story'—and then!" He saw himself leaning against the tavern wall, telling one lie after another. How could he possibly have done it? He ought to be thoroughly ashamed of himself, but he couldn't quite manage to be. He stared scornfully into the darkness. The stupid fools, to believe all that stuff. But he certainly had told it pretty well. Very well, in fact. And he hadn't in the least had the feeling that he was lying. It really seemed to him as if everything had actually happened—now that was queer! Just as he used to be carried away in his play at Heisterberg, so that he really thought he was the czar of Russia, just so had he felt when he was telling that story! Strange! But it certainly was not altogether unscrupulous of him. He must watch himself, however. What if it should come upon him at home or in school, and he should begin to talk along that way!

He lay there, staring fixedly into the darkness, thinking about himself for the first time in his life. He was divided between pride and anxiety, but—the others certainly couldn't have done it!

And in this way a consciousness of his own personality dawned upon him.

## CHAPTER V

ONE afternoon soon after this, when Klaus came home from school, he found his father lying on his bed asleep. He went back to the kitchen, where his mother was sitting at her sewing-machine, and asked, in great surprise, "What's the matter with father?"

Without looking up from her work, she said curtly, "Your father's side hurts."

"Do you think," said Klaus, in sudden anxiety, "do you think he's going to get better?"

"Don't ask such stupid questions," she answered, with a frown. "How do I know?"

He went back to the room, and sat down with his slate at the window, where there was still a little bit of daylight; but he kept looking at his father, who was lying with his face to the wall, sometimes groaning in pain. What if his father should die! But he had always been such a strong man. It wasn't likely—at least, he had never seen or heard of a strong man like his father dying. But if it should happen,—well, it would be a dreary prospect, and he could never be a teacher.

After a little while his father turned toward him. "Tell me, Klaus," he said, in a tired voice, "have you thought much about what you want to be?"

Klaus was startled to hear his father speak of what he himself had just been thinking. "If it's possible, father," he said, "I want to be a teacher."

Jan Baas was silent for a while. "If I don't get really well again, my boy," he said, finally, "it won't be possible. Of course your mother will work like a horse, and you won't be absolutely poverty-stricken; but she won't be able to accomplish that."

Klaus, in the stoic way of our simple folk, accepted the possibility that his father might die. "If that happens," he said gently, "I'll have to be something else."

"Well, what else, my boy?"

"Well," said Klaus, after a few moments of thinking, "I believe I'll be a storekeeper."

"Your mother can probably manage that," his father said. "You must tell her that you don't care a thing about teaching, and that you want to be a storekeeper above everything else. If you don't, Klaus, she'll sew all night long so that you can be a teacher. You know how she is."

"Yes, father."

"I guess it would be better for you to tell her that now whenever you get the chance. And you'd better be confirmed next Easter."

"Yes, father."

"Well, then, that's all right now, Klaus."

"Yes, father." Then he went on, in a courageous voice, "Do you know, father, I really think it's much better for me to work with my hands. I think being busy around the store will be great fun. I believe I'd like a hardware store better than any other kind."

"Well, then you do that, Klaus. And now that's all settled."

They looked at each other uncertainly, and each saw plainly that the other was hiding his real feelings. But they did not speak of it again.

A week later his father was sick in bed again. And he was in bed every few days from now on. He came home pale and cold, with the sweat standing out on his brow, and lay for hours in dreadful pain, with his face turned to the wall so that they couldn't see it. When the pain became a little easier he turned from the wall, and in spite of the clatter of the machine in the kitchen, talked away cheerfully to the children, sitting or standing in a little group by the window. Once in a while as he talked his face contracted with pain. In his old way, he would begin to joke with them, somewhat clumsily and partially,



especially as he always praised them to the skies. But it was always effective, because his face and voice laughed and livened up as he did it. "Now Fritz and Ernst there," he said to the little ones, "there's a couple of strong fellows for you. Why, they could tear up trees by the roots. And if they both took hold together and gave themselves up to it, they could break in a wall!" And he laughed his hearty laugh when they believed it, and swelled out their little bellies proudly and cried, "Shall we do it now, father?" To little tow-headed Hanna, who now took Lotte's place in looking after the house, and who was exactly like her in her cheery friendliness, he said, "Hanna's the girl! When she's grown up and married she'll make the finest kind of soup out of shavings! And dresses—why, she'll make them right on the women!" Cute little Hanna laughed. "I'll go right down and get some shavings, father," she said, "and make you some soup." To Klaus he said, "That Klaus, now—there's a fellow that will make a cashier—and a cashier's a pretty kind of a fellow. When he's a storekeeper one of these days, and wants to get some syrup, he'll fall into the barrel; and when the boss is trying to pack up herring, he'll put his apprentice in by mistake." "Oh, you mean because I'm so thin, father," laughed Klaus; "but I'm not weak for all that—I'm quick in gymnastics, I can just tell you. Just you keep on teasing; you'll see some day what kind of a storekeeper I'll be."

In the following week, Klaus, waking up one night, heard the humming of a machine. He thought it must be around midnight, and he lay there breathless, thinking about all kinds of marvellous creatures—elves and goblins and such. Then, with his heart thumping hard, he got up, went through the kitchen, and looked into the living-room. His mother was sitting at the machine sewing, and her face looked very tired.

He went back to bed, and lay awake, thinking hard. So far, his mother's ability and careful management had kept away the signs of poverty; but now they were plain. His father was bringing in almost nothing, and rent, coal,

and food all had to be paid for. And on the chest stood all kinds of salves and medicines for his father. Klaus realized more and more what the value of money really is, and he grew terribly worried.

He couldn't get to sleep again. Early in the morning he got up and went straight to Kalli Dau to ask him whether he didn't know of some work he could get to do, as errand boy or something of that sort. He had so much free time, he said, that he really didn't know what to do with it.

Kalli's mother, who, even as early as this was dressed in one of her gay waists, looked up at once in surprise. "Are you looking for a place?" she said; "is it as bad as that? Why, you can just help here with us; you can help us make wreaths in the back room there."

Kalli Dau pushed by his mother with his coffee-cup and bit of stale bread in his hand. "Come on," he said to Klaus; "where she is you can't get in a single sensible word."

In spite of the showery April weather, they sat down on the bench outside the shop window while Kalli Dau set forth the possibilities. "Last autumn," he began, "I delivered milk for half a year so she could buy herself some new waists. But there's nothing in that. You have to be up at five, and you have to be going up and down stairs eternally with your load. Look here at my right leg—see? It's a little crooked, all on account of that blamed milk. And the scoldings you get! Sometimes you've brought too little and sometimes too much. Sometimes you've brought the wrong pail, and sometimes you've slopped it over. Well, now, if we can't find anything else, you're pretty sure to be able to get something to do at Lösch's, the teamster's, in Wex Strasse. He needs a boy mornings and evenings to curry the horses, wash the wagons, sweep, clean the harness, and all that sort of thing."

They went there at once and found the proprietor and several workmen standing out in the stable yard among all kinds of teams, wagons, cribs, and sacks of fodder.

Kalli Dau and Lösch the teamster were old acquaintances—at least Kalli talked to him as if he were an old drayman himself. The upshot was that Klaus Baas was engaged at the rate of twelve cents a day, to work five hours a day, two in the mornings and three in the evenings, with supper thrown in.

It was frightfully hard for him to get up at five. He hadn't nearly had his sleep out, and it was dark as pitch, and so cold. But something in his mother's voice when she called him simply made him get up at once. His little bed-fellow sat up in bed rubbing her eyes and begging pitifully to be allowed to sleep just a little longer. But Klaus seized her without a word and set her on her feet. Staggering with sleepiness, they silently put on their clothes in the darkness, went out to the kitchen, and washed in the basin. Their mother herself attended to combing their hair. Little Hanna clasped both hands around the rod of the fireplace to brace herself to bear the terrible wet fine comb as it passed from her forehead all the way over her head. They ate their breakfast standing around the fireplace; their mother was already at the machine. Then Hanna went about the housework and Klaus groped his way downstairs.

The work was not exactly hard, but he had to be on his feet all the time. He had to sweep some of the stable yard—that was clean work; he had to harness a team—that meant moving pretty quick; he had to throw down the straw—and that was fun. But it was not so much fun when he had to curry five or six big horses standing motionless in the low dark stalls. What if the very horse on which he was working should suddenly get wild and kick out violently before and behind; where would he jump to save himself? He imagined everything that would happen if fire should suddenly break out—and what he would probably have to do if it did. Or, he thought out complete pictures of things that would happen in the future. He saw himself living in Heisterberg again—for his imaginings of the future always went back to the village. He was grown up—a teacher, or a storekeeper,

and he saw himself strolling around the country talking discreetly with an acquaintance here and there, just as he had often heard men talking on the village street. And then he saw himself going home—to a stately looking house on the main street, with windows lighted up, and his father, mother, wife and children all standing at the windows waiting for him. Sometimes, when everything in the yard happened to be quiet for a time, the pictures vanished into thin air, and he fell asleep resting against the horse, his upraised arm still holding the brush. And there he slept till a loud voice or a wagon rumbling into the yard awakened him with a start.

He liked several of the old drivers very much. He enjoyed helping them and being with them, because they worked around among all those big beasts and heavy harnesses so calmly and surely. And he liked to listen to their slow talk, mostly about the peculiarities of the horses and the condition of the loads and the roads. He liked it still better when they talked about farming in Holstein or in Mecklenburg, where they had come from, or about their brothers and sisters in America. Occasionally they talked about their wives and children. No matter what it was about, they talked along simply and naturally, easily, and without the least excitement. And, as usual, Klaus's young and impressionable spirit, busily devising great and varied backgrounds for everything he saw or heard, took the greatest joy in all that they said.

But two of the younger men there had an ugly liking for vulgar words, using them especially for the docile horses. They were fond, too, of telling obscene stories; and early in the morning, particularly, they made a practice of unloading everything they had heard in the pot-house the night before.

Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse, on which the yard faced, was at that time still occupied by a number of low old frame houses with pointed gables, over which the sun shone into the yard early in the morning. In the spring sunshine the heavy wagons, the men going busily to and fro, and the big dray horses coming slowly and heavily out

of the big door, made a striking and impressive picture of human activities. Klaus took great joy in being in it all, in working around, alert and deft. But when the two common fellows were there, filling the yard with their rough talk, and calling back and forth with their curses and evil stories, which Klaus had to listen to whether he wanted to or not, it was quite different. The pure simple joy that had unconsciously filled his heart was gone.

While things were going on in just this way, Klaus wished one morning, as he had wished a good many times before, that both the fellows would vanish from the yard by sudden death or any other means. Indeed, he even made a sudden, vehement prayer to God for it—although he was not on intimate terms with God then. After he had made this prayer, it happened that one of the men made a mocking remark to the proprietor's wife and was discharged at once. Soon after that the other one began to load a cart with hay, which one of the older men stacked up. When the cart was full he fastened the beam in front and began to fasten it behind. In doing so, he leaned his whole weight on it. The knot in front broke and the beam and the man tumbled over backwards. He fell heavily to the stone pavement, where he lay unconscious.

This sudden event horrified Klaus's sensitive soul beyond all bounds. He let his brush fall and hurried home as fast as he could. There, trembling in every limb, he told them what he had been through, and declared that he could never go there again.

For several days he hung around the house and the courtyard, constantly haunted by that awful sight. And the recollection of his prayer added particularly to his suffering. His conventional religious teaching had not helped him in any way to find even the conception of truth and beauty that lies hid under its worthless rubble; indeed, it had only hindered and suppressed the natural silent longing of his soul to find a piety of its own. And no one had helped him in any other way to find out

whether there was not some mystery behind all actual things. The result was that in these deepest emotions his soul was thoroughly unprepared—quite ignorant. That fervent prayer in the yard had come from a heart that without knowing it lived—as many other people live—among ancient pagan ideas. He felt that he was involved in the matter, because by his wish and his prayer he had set on these men the evil powers that had brought about the accident. And now those spirits might easily be on the lookout for him, to demand his gratitude, or perhaps to make him follow them; or maybe, after they had once tasted blood, they would want his, too.

But the next day, when his father came home sick again, Klaus's fear of the evil spirits paled before the plainly visible trouble at home, and he had to go out to find work again. He had a vague notion that he must find a more refined sort of work, where he would be safe from rough talk and horrible accidents. He pictured to himself a nice clean room in which he had pleasant work to do. He would certainly be able to hold his own in a place like that.

He put on his Sunday jacket and went out. He peered into the flower shop and then into the bedroom, where he found Kalli Dau applying cold cloths to his little brother, who was sick in bed. He was scolding away at his brother Jonni, who had stolen some money out of his pocket and was on the way to drink it up. "And the old man's running after some woman or other," Kalli said, "and the old woman's gossiping with the coal woman next door." He sat there hunched up, rubbing his thin brown hands between his knees. "Our family's a rotten lot," he said; "I can just tell you that."

Klaus Baas drew back toward the door. He had given up his place at the drayman's, he said, and wanted to find another place now just as soon as he could. Kalli Dau came out with him at once, and went with him to the tavern at the corner. Here he nodded to the maid, whom he knew, and asked her for a newspaper. After he had cooled his little brother's forehead again, and had sold a gay tulip—putting the money in his own pocket—they sat down

at the counter to look through the newspaper. After a while Klaus Baas pointed to an advertisement, and said critically, "What do you think about this?" Kalli Dau bent over and read that the artist Laura Morgenstern, who lived on the Neuenwall, wanted a handy boy to help in all kinds of work.

They let the paper drop and looked at each other. Neither of them could make much out of it. An artist — what was that? And a woman, into the bargain.

Just then a waiter came along the street, one of Kalli Dau's many acquaintances. He called him in to ask for information. But the waiter only confused matters more. He thought that it was likely that she painted naked men and that she would make Klaus take off his clothes at once and paint him. And as the man hurried out, he made a face to indicate that the Lord only knew what was to be expected from such as she.

But, said Kalli Dau, what of it, if it was so? Horses certainly ran around naked, and for that matter everybody was naked under his shirt. And how many clothes did the women walking around St. Pauli wear?

Klaus Baas sat sunk in deep thought. A woman that painted naked men? Well, after all — even if she did make him take off his clothes, and even if she got angry and threw her brush at his head, still it would certainly be better than staying at a place where a man cursed so horribly, and finally fell to his death. And Laura Morgenstern's house certainly had a door which he could keep a close eye on, and tear out of if it looked as if anything dreadful were going to happen.

He slid down from the counter and said that he was going there right away. Kalli Dau went with him.

They climbed up three flights of steps in an old house on the Neuenwall, and stood in front of the door. Kalli Dau opened it. At once they heard a strong, rather rumbling voice from the next room ask who was there. They both drew back from the door a little and Kalli Dau said loudly, "The errand-boy."

A wardrobe or a huge chair moved inside. Heavy steps

came toward them. The door opened, and an elderly woman stood before them. She was tall and large, and had her spectacles low down on her nose. Looking over her glasses at the two boys, she said curtly, "Which one is it?"

"That one there," said Kalli, with his usual assurance.

"Well," she said, "and what are you doing here?"

"Oh," said Kalli, "I just came along."

Laura Morgenstern pointed down the stairs with her big palette, and Kalli Dau vanished without a word. "Come in," she said to Klaus.

She went in, sat down on the big chair, leaned back in it, and looked sharply over her glasses toward something at which Klaus didn't dare to look. Then she looked through her glasses at a stretched canvas about a yard square. With her arm stretched straight out, she gave a gentle little dab at it with her brush. Without looking at him, she asked him his name, where he was born, whether his father and mother were living, if he had any brothers and sisters, and whether he went to school. He answered all her questions slowly and distinctly, with a certain solemnity, too. While he was talking she gazed around the room, now and then putting a stroke on the canvas.

Then she turned around and looked at him sharply. After she had looked a while she said, "What do you think, Tuddi? I really believe we could make use of him for a picture. Just look at his good little Low German nose. And his mouth has a sort of strength you don't often see. The whole line of his head shows good blood. Turn around that way," she said, pointing into the room with her brush.

Turning around, he saw a girl about twelve years old sitting in a big brown chair with a high back. She had on a short blue dress, her long legs were carelessly crossed, and she had a heavy old Bible in her lap. A long black wig framed her energetic little face. Over her shoulder hung a red robe, fastened in front with a big old coin on a gold chain. She sat there quite motionless, like a tiny goddess.



"He looks like an old German," she said, looking at Klaus Baas. "But that doesn't make any difference. You can use him just the same. He'll have to have a brown wig and draw his face down a little — then he can represent one perfectly well — one of the little ones, of course. Have him for Hosea — or Micah."

"No," said the artist, going on with her painting, "Hosea and Micah won't do. I tell you, now, all words ending in *a* are feminine. I don't care what your pastor says about it, or your teacher, or you yourself. Hosea and Micah were feminine. But he can be Malachi."

"All right," the little girl said. "But for goodness' sake tell him what we're talking about. He'll soon be looking as if he hadn't any sense at all."

Leaning back in her chair, the artist looked sharply at her model. Then, straightening her arm, she put a light stroke on the canvas. "Well," she said in her deep voice, "we'll have to tell him a little about it. You see, the old pastor of Hogerupp, up there in Schleswig, and his wife, want to tack up the apostles and prophets in their church, and we're at it now. That one there," she added, pointing with the brush, "is Obadiah, and you can be Malachi. Now you take the basin off the stove, put it there on the table, and wash the brushes there. Yes, that's the way. I took old men for my models at first, and had fifteen of them all done. Then the pastor and his wife came — plain old folks they are — and they looked at the work, and were satisfied, too, as far as I had gone. But they thought the rest ought to be young people, for a number of the glorious company had certainly been somewhere around twenty. And then, too, they thought that some of the old ones I had done did not look so very holy and inspired. Open your eyes a little wider, Tuddi — you're always forgetting that. Well, now, I haven't got a bit of imagination, especially in religious matters. I'm no saint myself, and I've never even met one. And the pastor isn't one either, for in spite of the fact that he's in very good circumstances he'll pay only a hundred marks apiece. Then I got the idea of setting the youngster there up on the chair and

dressing her up a bit. She isn't any saint, either — she's a rogue and a terror, but still, being a child, she's more like one than the rest of us. Open your eyes wide, Tuddi, and think of Norderney or Sylt, or anywhere else you go in the summer. Think of all the heavenly things you have there, or else try to look as if you were seeing the heavenly hosts."

"Mercy on us, Aunt Laura," said the little girl, "how you do rumble on. Say, can't he be Habbakuk? Just see how strange he looks, and how much suffering there is in his eyes. Habbakuk certainly had eyes like that — they fit the name. Shall I just read you a few verses out of Habbakuk?"

The artist shook her head. "We're at Obadiah now," she said. "Suppose you read a few verses out loud, so we can get into the mood again."

The little girl raised the book a little on her knee and read slowly in her high childish voice:—

"'But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.'"

Laura Morgenstern painted away with her arm at full length; the little girl in the wig and the red cloak alternately opened her eyes wide and read a verse; and Klaus Baas washed the brushes. Once, when he cast a quick, shy glance at the girl, who seemed to him incredibly lovely and strange, she stuck out her tongue, quick as lightning. Of course, then, he simply had to look again — he couldn't help it. And again the end of the tongue appeared like a flash. Then he looked down quickly at the brushes.

"Don't put up with that," said the artist, in her easy, monotonous way, painting busily all the time. "You do it right back at her."

"Just let him try it!" said the little girl, just as calmly and angrily, as she put on her wide-eyed, saintly look.

Klaus felt unutterably confused and helpless, but at the

same time very happy and safe. He washed the brushes and squeezed them out, and every now and then he looked up at both of them.

A neat maid came for the little girl, and she went away with a haughty, aggressive look at him. Then he had to go out into the other room and the kitchen and do all kinds of things. All the time the artist talked on in the same rumbling way, and was just as nice as before. He ate supper with her in the little kitchen, and then he was dismissed.

When he got home he found that his father had just got to sleep after a severe attack of his pain. A squat little woman was consulting with his mother about the making of a dress for her silver wedding. He told Hanna about everything, word for word. He was full of it all — picturing to himself just how it would be the next day, and from then on. He told Hanna twice that he must put on his best jacket the next day, too — of course. He couldn't go to his new place with a ragged jacket. "It's a very special job," he said, "one where you've got to behave very nicely."

## CHAPTER VI

AND now, from early morning on, Klaus was longing for the moment to come when school would be out and he could put on his best coat and go to the artist's. He didn't notice that his father was at home almost every day now, sitting, pale and dull, by the kitchen window, with a quilt over his thin, sharp knees. When he handed over the three marks that Laura Morgenstern gave him every Saturday to his mother, he didn't notice how eagerly she seized them, or how thin her hand was. His very life was bound up in the keen joy he felt in those three hours every day that he could spend in the same room with the big, growling woman and the pretty, pert girl in the red mantle and the black wig.

Laura Morgenstern droned along about everything that came into her head, either from the questions they asked or from what was read aloud.

"Now I'm finding out at last what's in the Bible," she said, "and I must say there's a lot of nonsense in it. Take this Obadiah, for instance. Can you understand how he can help us nowadays? What has he got to do with my sins or my worries?"

"Have you any worries, Aunt Laura?" asked the girl in the red wig.

"Of course I have," she growled. "Everybody has."

Klaus stared at her. "Why should she have any worries?" he wondered. "She is well, and she has money. What's she talking about worries for?"

Sometimes, lost in thought, the artist worked away eagerly, her face set and earnest. It was easy to see that her thoughts were far away; usually she was thinking about her old home and her childhood. She seemed

to be brooding and pondering over some difficulty or trouble, and to want to hold Christianity responsible for it.

“My father was a teacher, Klaus,” she said; “he was earnest and industrious, and I tell you, he was pious, but all those Bible lessons — and there were a lot of them — the texts and the hymns, and all the other church stuff that was thrown in, — all that didn’t do us any good at all. We children turned out just the way we would have without all those thousand Bible lessons; one of us — I mean myself — became a whimsical, grumbling old creature; another of us —” she turned a little and looked more sharply at the small, fine face under the black wig — “Klaus, do you think that religion can change a person’s real nature?”

“Yes,” Klaus said, “we are told that it changed Paul’s.”

“Get away with your Paul!” she said. “Talk about Laura Morgenstern and Klaus Baas and Lösch the teamster, and people like that.”

Klaus frowned. “Well,” he said, seriously, “if you read the most beautiful things in the Bible out loud to somebody, he’ll get more pious and earnest, that’s what I believe.”

“Oh, really,” she said, “so that’s what you believe!” She turned clear around and said, “Your eyes look nice now, Tuddi! I imagine Obadiah’s eyes looked just like that when he was getting hell hot for his people.”

“Well,” the girl said angrily, “why do you keep talking to that stupid youngster as if I weren’t here? Does he know more than I do?”

The girl in the black wig — her curly light hair crept out from under it sometimes — was always cross at him; her anger, however, made him feel vigorous and cheerful, and to be mocked at by her made him feel haughtier.

“He’s awfully tiresome to-day, auntie!” she said. “He surely is run down! Do wind him up again!”

He looked at her scornfully.

Then she looked back “with saintly eyes” at the artist.

After a while she looked at Klaus and said imperiously, "Bring me the footstool!"

He brought the stool and put it under her feet, saying in a low, defiant tone, "If you weren't being painted, I wouldn't have brought it."

The artist heard him. "Don't you mind about her being painted, Klaus! If she doesn't ask you politely, don't you do it. At home she can boss the maid around; but here she's got to be polite."

The next day the little hypocrite said, "Please bring me the footstool." When he went to put it under her feet—she was staring at the painter with great soulful eyes—she put her foot down, not on the stool, but on his neck, and pushed his head down. He seized her foot in his thin hand, set it firmly on the stool, and held it there a while.

Then she wholly forgot her sanctified pose. She stuck out her head and hissed at him furiously. She called this "showing her teeth like a tiger." It seemed to be her last resource.

But he calmly looked her straight in the eye, angry and yet delighted that her face was so near.

One day, when he was in the kitchen before the sitting had begun, the doorbell rang without his hearing it. Hearing a light step behind him, he turned around and saw a little six-year-old girl. He recognized her at once as Tuddi's sister; she had the same delicate body and finely cut head, and her upper lip, too, was too short to cover her teeth. Without saying a word, she held out a little white milk bottle, with a rubber nipple on it. He looked at the delicate little creature in amazement, and asked what she wanted him to do.

Then it was her turn to be surprised. She shook her head at such a stupid Jack, and held out the bottle again, saying, "Warm it." Then he understood. He put the bottle in warm water and stood looking down at the little thing beside him, so delicate, and so finely finished. Surprised, and entirely unsuspecting, Klaus asked, "Who's to have the milk?"

She looked up at him with great questioning eyes. Then she said, in a tone of conviction, "You really are as stupid as Tuddi says you are!"

He said no more, but stood there wondering whether young ones in the city were kept on the bottle so long. He could hardly wait till the milk was warm to see. He gave her the bottle and followed her into the studio, where work had already begun.

The artist, leaning back in her big chair, was looking sharply over her spectacles at the model, and then putting cautious strokes on the canvas with her long stiff arm. Obadiah, in the red mantle, sat with her legs crossed, her gray eyes fixed on the artist. The child was sitting at a low table on one side, on which were a lot of loose blue beads, and a long black string on which they were to be strung. She hadn't begun her work yet, but sat there sucking at her bottle, leaning back in her chair with her legs crossed, just like her sister, and looking at Klaus earnestly.

Now it was even more pleasant in the bright, clean studio. The friendly chatter didn't stop for a moment. Sometimes, if she were just urged to it, the artist talked on and on.

"Did you use to play, Aunt Laura," the children asked, "when you were as old as we are? Tell us about it."

"Did we play?" she said. "Of course we did!" It seemed as if a soft hand had passed over her gruff old face. "Did we play!—we used to live next to the minister's, and we were allowed to play all we wanted to in his old, overgrown garden. At the far end of it there was a grassy mound. From it we could see away off into the country. This mound was our brother's exclusive property" — she looked scrutinizingly at the work on the canvas; then she went on more gently, "we had a little brother, a pretty, light-haired youngster; he was a jolly one — and clever, too. He always wore a very soft velvety brown suit — the cloth caught the light a good deal; I don't know what kind it was, I've never seen cloth like

it since. He wore a broad, snow-white frill around his neck, and his pretty hair hung down over his collar. He was very vain about his fine clothes, and yet he was untidy, and didn't bother at all when he got them spoiled. And we didn't scold him for it, either; he was too handsome for that — and too bright. We three girls were all ugly; we had to go around all wearing the same kind of rough gray that mother used to buy by the piece for us. And we were naturally peevish and heavy. And just because we were so peevish and heavy and envious, just on that account he seemed so wonderfully handsome and bright and equable.”

She was silent for a while, as if she were thinking of the last thing she had said. Then she went on, deep in recollection: “The mound at the end of the garden belonged to him alone; his kingdom, he called it. He sat on a little chair he had up there, with his legs crossed, turning his slender head in one direction and then in another, and saying all kinds of foolish things, as if he were giving commands or pronouncing a sentence or some such thing. We three were his retinue; one of us cleaned the little wooden steps that led up to the hill; another of us got down on her knees and mowed the grass on its slope; and the third one, bending low, brought him his meals. Toward evening, when the sun shone on his fine features, and made his silky hair shine, we used to say ‘How handsome you are! How handsome you are!’ He pretended not to care anything about our praises, but he noticed who laid it on the thickest. Then our father would call us, in his curt, gruff voice, and we had to go in and study hard — principally texts and hymns. Our brother learned things easily and quickly, but he forgot them quickly, too. He was too easy-going to hold anything firmly. When it was time for him to go to bed, we used to quarrel about who should undress him and put him to bed; finally he would let the one do it that had flattered him the most during the day. And we ugly gray crows envied the lucky one horribly — sometimes we really pulled each other's hair about it.”



She sat idle for a while, lost in gloomy thoughts, looking now at the canvas, now at the black wig. Then she drew herself up again and set to work with renewed energy. "Now, Tuddi, look just as proud as you can! Just imagine that Klaus Baas wants to run the paint-brush over your saucy little nose! Turn your head a little to the left—that's it! Your face is proudest of all when you're looking to one side a little. That's good now—now Klaus is coming with the brush—that's very good! Just let yourself go and imagine he's doing it—the shameless cub! Yes, you've plenty of imagination! After this we'll paint little Sanna. What do you want to sit for, Sanna?"

The little one looked up from the beads she was stringing. Her full lips, which had parted in the intensity of her work, closed again over her big white teeth.

"I think she ought to be Zephaniah," Tuddi said. "It doesn't matter what he wrote. You're going to be Zephaniah."

The child nodded, and repeated the name to herself several times. "I'll wear this chain I'm making," she said.

Now and then Tuddi talked about her home—about her mother, who was just too dear and funny; about her father, who had been in India and had come home an invalid; about her brothers, most of whom were unendurable; about the rooms upstairs and downstairs; about a garden; about some school where studying was carried on as if it were a sort of pleasant game, and where the teachers were either hideous or heavenly; and about verses in foreign languages, that were horribly hard to learn. Once she was asking for help on a composition. She had to write an essay on "The High Moments of Life." What the teacher meant by high moments was baptism, confirmation, taking the sacrament; but Tuddi thought they were things like taking a trip to Sylt, going skating in the winter, and getting married.

Sometimes Klaus Baas took the centre of the stage. He had to tell them about the village, and the games they

played there, about the pond, the churchyard, the sea-shore, and the sand. He was always very much afraid of making mistakes in his grammar, for High German was still a foreign, difficult speech for him. So he talked along rather stiffly and properly. Sometimes he was troubled about what he was telling; he wasn't sure whether it was all right to tell some of the things; he would hesitate about using some expression, and get stuck entirely.

Then Tuddi had a chance to make fun of him again. "Go over and wind him up again, Sanna," she would say. Then he didn't know what else to do but make the story move on in some other way, and so he had to make up a little. And as lies and fiction are a pretty risky business, his cheeks grew red and his eyes bright. But he had the satisfaction of hearing little Sanna say, in her gentle voice, "He's running again now, Tuddi."

Sometimes the black wig monopolized the conversation entirely; she gave them her representations of the grinning tiger, the hungry hyena, the bored lion — about half the zoölogical garden, in fact. Then she gave a "nigger show," as she called it. She stood little Sanna in front of Klaus, and said, "Look, ladies and gentlemen! here is the negro prince Jumbo! Jumbo, show the ladies and gentlemen your teeth!" Then Sanna showed her teeth and tried to look fierce at Klaus. They were particularly fond of this scene, and gave it often. Klaus drank it in so with his eyes, with all his senses, as they stood fine and delicate at his very feet, that one day, twenty years later, when he met little Sanna in the hall of the house on Fähr Strasse in Uhlenhorst, he said the old words again, — "Jumbo, show your teeth!" And it really cheered her up, worried and sad though she was.

When Obadiah was finished, Klaus Baas had to take his turn. He was to sit for Daniel, and he was supposed to look as Daniel did in the lions' den. "For that's all those Hogetrupper people know about him, Klaus!"

How happy Klaus was while they were decking him out! How confused he felt, and how honored, when the

artist put the green mantle around him! What terrible den-of-lions eyes Tuddi made right in front of him! How gently and cheerily Sanna hung her string of blue beads around his neck, as he knelt in front of her! How his heart did jump when she stroked his hair hesitatingly and said, "Oh, Tuddi, just look, he has a moleskin cap on!"

But the next day, when life was as beautiful as it could possibly be, all at once it changed; the two children did not come. The artist said that they had gone to their country home, near Hammer, earlier than usual that year, because their father was sick. He asked a few questions timidly, and learned that their father was a merchant who traded with India, and that he had caught some disease on one of his trips there. "It's a distinguished old family, Klaus," she said. "They used to be well off, and they aren't really poor now; but what good does their money do them, when their father is sick? There's nothing but misery in this world."

To-day she was painting the red mantle, which she had hanging over a chair. She worked on for a while, breathing heavily. Then she said, "Last evening I was looking in the Bible, Klaus, for the best places in it. My father was always praising the Psalms; he used to quote something Luther said about them; but Heaven help me, I can't find much of anything that would really help a man. And I don't even remember what my father used to read. It's my belief that people praise or blame a thing on hearsay for centuries; one man repeats it after another without thinking what he's saying."

"Our teacher says," said Klaus, in his distinct, careful, High German, "that the sermon on the mount, and then the sufferings of our Saviour, and then the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, are the best things in the Bible."

"Is that so?" she said. "Well, you come back again to-morrow, Klaus. Come back to-morrow!"

The next day, when he went into the flat, she came out of the studio, and said, in her surly yet friendly way, "We're going to leave Daniel out to-day, Klaus; I've

got my brother in there — he happens to be in Hamburg for a few days — and he's to sit to me for an apostle. I must get on first of all with those apostles. I thought you might read aloud to me now and then, so that I'd get into the right mood; I haven't any imagination at all. You've got to read slowly, though; my brother's a simple soul, and he hasn't had anything to do with books for a long time."

Then she went back into the studio, and Klaus went first to clean up the kitchen.

When he went into the studio and looked curiously at the brother, he was horror-struck to see that he was the drunken loafer, to whom he had boasted so six months before at the corner of the Grossneumarkt. Although the man had a new suit on, and had had his hair cut, Klaus recognized him at once by his beautiful eyes and by his beard with two shades in it. The loafer acted as if he didn't know Klaus; but once, when the artist looked away, he gave Klaus a confidential wink.

"What do you want to read to-day?" the artist said. "I have somebody read to me while I work, Jacob, so as to get into the right mood."

Klaus understood. He opened to the sermon on the mount, and read out the weighty passages sentence after sentence, in a slow, measured voice. The brother did not say anything; the sister painted on with real zeal and with almost a physical strain. The sweat stood out on her furrowed brow and between the gray hairs on her temples. She said nothing, except that now and then she commented on what was read: "That's good, Klaus! that's the way it ought to be!"

They worked on in this way for three or four days. On the fourth day, when Klaus was setting the picture to one side, he marvelled to see how far on it was, and how clear and smooth the face stood out.

The next day, while Klaus was still at work in the kitchen, the outside door opened. Klaus thought nothing of it, because he thought it was the brother coming. But when he heard some one come groping along, stumbling

heavily, he looked out the door. It certainly was the brother; but his clothes were dirty, his hair wild, and he was drunk. He nodded to Klaus Baas in sly embarrassment. Klaus hurried out of the kitchen and said softly, "Go away! get out of here!" but the artist had heard him. She opened the door and saw him. She did not say anything; but she waved him away with a stiff, helpless gesture. He turned around abashed, looked at her again in a stupid, confused way, and then went out.

When Klaus got done in the kitchen and went into the studio, she was sitting all huddled up in her old place before the picture, with her palette and brushes in her hands, staring straight in front of her. When she heard him come in, she pulled herself together and began to work again. Looking over at her timidly, he saw her looking intently over toward the place where her brother had sat, as if she were painting on from the image of him she had in her mind. She was quite absorbed. Gradually the strained look passed out of her firm old face, and she painted for hours with particularly keen, strong inspiration.

Klaus went back and forth, and finally went to the table to wash the brushes. She looked over at him once, and was sorry for him, standing so quietly at his work. "We'll ask the children over for Saturday, Klaus," she said; "then it will be cheerful here again."

She worked on uninterruptedly for three hours, until the daylight was gone. Then she got up, and found that she was tired. "Take the picture off and turn it toward the wall," she said. Then she went as usual into the kitchen to wash her hands.

Klaus went up and looked at the picture. He recognized the brother; but whereas the face of the real man was corrupted with mean vices, the face on the canvas was full of the noblest of all passions, the grief and enthusiasm of a great, pure cause; dreadful suffering showed in the mouth, and the eyes were drawn together, as if anxiously trying to discover aid. Klaus began to cry violently, still staring at the picture through his tears.

Coming back, she found him crying. She put her arm

around him awkwardly, and walked up and down the room with him, while he wept bitterly.

"It didn't do us any good, Klaus," she said. "The thing goes too deep for that. I thought it would turn out this way; but I wanted to try once more."

He wanted to comfort her somehow, so he said — calling her "thou" in his warm sympathy — "But thou hast imagination after all, Aunt Laura!"

"Oh, yes, Klaus," she said, "when a person is in such grief! But you see for yourself now, it's all no good."

The next day, when Klaus went home at noon, and was going to hurry off again to the artist's, he saw that his father was neither in the kitchen nor in bed. Klaus was glad; he turned on his heel briskly and said, "Has father gone out?"

Then his mother came out of the bedroom. Turning away from him, she said, in a low, hard voice, "Father has been taken to the hospital. He's to be operated on."

Klaus stared at her, and saw the infinite suffering in her eyes. It shook him so that he could not say a single word. "I haven't bothered myself about him. I haven't bothered myself about him," rang in his ears. He asked his mother what hospital it was, snatched up his cap, and ran out without another word.

In the vestibule of the hospital, he asked about his father in his clear, excited voice. A doctor came along just then and heard him. "You've come at just the right time," he said. "Come along."

As they went up the stairs, the doctor put his arm around Klaus's shoulders and said, "You're a lively youngster! Where are you from? Holstein, eh? Well — it may turn out that you won't keep your father much longer; then you'll have to be a stout youngster and help your mother! Don't stay with your father very long; go back and tell your mother that she must come."

Klaus, breathing hard, silently followed the man into the ward full of small, mean beds, in one of which lay his father. His face was sunken, and white as death, and there were blue rings around his sunken eyes.

He opened his eyes slowly and looked up without any intelligence in his face. Then he recognized his son, and tried to force himself out of his stupor. "Are you there, my boy," he said in a low voice. "I borrowed ninety marks from Timmermann on the quiet, a little at a time — when we hadn't anything in the house — you must pay him back, when you get to earning something yourself. Mother mustn't know anything about it — she'd be ashamed and work herself to death, if she knew. Then there's sixty-seven marks more, that your mother had to borrow from the storekeeper. As soon as I'm tended to, you go back home right away, and you see to getting that sixty-seven marks somewhere. Mother's so straight and honest that she can't stand owing any one anything. But you mustn't tell her you're going, or she wouldn't let you go. Then come right back and keep a good watch on her, and keep her from hurting herself — you know what she's like. You must pet the little ones now and then, Klaus; only don't you let her see you."

Klaus kept nodding, with the tears running down his cheeks. He waited for his father to say something more, but he lay there, dead white, his whole forehead covered with drops of sweat, breathing irregularly. Klaus was too shy to think of saying to the doctor, "Let me stay here! Don't send me away from my father's death-bed to carry a message!" He turned away and hurried home.

He didn't find his mother in the flat; she had started to the hospital already. He cheered up the children, put them to bed, and talked to little Hanna, who was crying, asking where her father was, and listening on the stairs for her mother to come back. At dusk their mother did come. "Father is dead," she said to Klaus, in a low cold tone. "Go to bed; I'm going to work."

He went out, crying gently, and stood in the hall. He gulped down his sobs so as not to wake Hanna, who had just gone to sleep.

Suddenly he heard his mother cry out — madly, like a wild beast.

He stood there listening in terrible anxiety, hearing her strike her head and her elbows against the table, uttering wild, grief-stricken cries. He fastened the hall door softly, so that she could not get out. Then looking through the keyhole into the kitchen he saw her lying among the dirty dishes on the hearth, in front of the wooden chair that Jan Baas used to sit in, groaning in a tortured, choking voice: "God, you're crazy—God, you're a— Don't you want anything more? If you would only come and take me! My dear husband! My handsome, dear, cheerful, good husband! So dear—so handsome—so good! What do you want, God? Do you want me to pray to you to help me take care of the children? Ha, ha! That makes me laugh at you! I can take care of the children myself! And if I couldn't, I wouldn't pray to you or anybody else about it! I'd take them and jump into the Elbe with them. Pray to you? *to you?* Ha, ha!"

Her son knelt outside the door, in deadly anxiety, his hair standing on end. He wondered what he ought to do; if she should rush out suddenly, he would hang on to her clothes and not let her go!

And so he spent the hours of that night, until finally only a dull groaning came from the kitchen. Then, overcome, he fell asleep, curled up like a dog against the door.

Toward morning he woke up freezing. He put on his good suit, and wrote on a scrap of paper:—

"Father was talking to me. I have to go back home. I have my good suit on and I have some clean handkerchiefs and three marks. You must keep up. I'll stand by you like a hero. From your loyal son,

"KLAUS HINRICH BAAS."

He peeped through the keyhole once more. She was sitting on the hearth, with her elbows up, holding one hand over her mouth, as if to keep it still, and staring straight at the wall. Then he left the flat, and went down the dark stairs. It was still dark outside. He went along the Langereihe toward Altona.



Gradually the sky grew lighter, and the streets gray. Part of the time Klaus's soul was with his father, who was being carried home now by strangers' hands; part of the time it was in the kitchen, where his mother was sitting on the cold hearth in the gray dawn. Part of the time he was thinking of their old home. Where would he ever get the money! Sixty-seven marks! Sixty-seven!

One day, ten years later, when he was sitting in his office on the shore of the Indian Ocean, thousands of miles away from home, he happened to hear that number again; and this sad morning and his bitter need rose up before him again, so deeply had that number stamped itself upon his soul.

## CHAPTER VII

KLAUS was terribly depressed. If he had been traveling second or even third class, where the people are always more or less stiff and quiet, he would have passed some pretty dreary hours. As it was, he was in the fourth class, where there is always something to see and hear.

When the train started, he looked around cautiously to see what sort of people he had struck, scanning them in turn. They were all sitting stupidly along the four walls, as quietly as he.

But after a while a young man in a light gray suit that wasn't as clean as it might have been, set a kind of hand-bell down on the floor and rang it with his foot. Then, winking at them all around, he announced that the concert was about to begin. He pulled a little instrument out of his pocket, held it to his lips crosswise, and began to blow on it. While he blew he kept drumming his fingers against his puffed cheeks in the oddest way imaginable. They all listened with marked attention, nodding to one another as if to say that it was really very pretty music. He played all kinds of ragtime, keeping time so smartly with his head that they never got tired watching him. Two young girls giggled and nudged each other. When he made a little pause, which he had certainly earned, for he had played till he was red in the face, a young fellow asked him whether he knew a certain waltz. He played it at once, to everybody's astonishment. When a nice, dumpy little woman with a big market basket asked him whether he couldn't also play a certain choral, it's true he had to admit that he couldn't. But when he went on to explain that chorals were too religious for this instrument, he regained his standing. When the train

reached the first station, he handed round his hat, thanked the people for the groschen and half-groschen they threw in it, and got out.

Conversation rather lagged after that. The old woman with the big basket told another woman across Klaus's head, that her sister-in-law in Eimsbüttel had just had her twelfth child. She had had plenty to live on so far, she said, but it would be a little hard now, for she would have to make shift somewhat.

There was one big strong man, smoking a short meerschau pipe, and looking like a good conscience personified. Taking his pipe out of his mouth, he told the two girls, who were still talking about the musician, that the fellow was a hobo waiter, who earned his living by travelling back and forth between stations several times a day, playing and taking up a collection. The girls took a defiant attitude, and said it didn't make a bit of difference how a man earned his living. Some earned it one way and some another. The pale young man who had been so fond of the waltz he asked for, agreed with them, and so got into conversation with them.

Meanwhile things grew lively in the other corner. Three pleasant, well-to-do country people, who really should have travelled third class to keep up with their position, but who wanted to make up for money they had spent having a good time, had struck up a conversation with a young man in a shabby havelock. He claimed to be an actor, and they declared that he was a tailor out of a job. In order to prove his calling, he stood up in the rocking coach, with his legs wide apart, and addressed the people: "Friends, Romans, countrymen! lend me your ears." Klaus Baas understood little of this. The country people were still dubious, however; with the air of men contending for a point of honor, they declared that a tailor might be perfectly familiar with arts of this kind. So then he showed them how death scenes were presented in the different theatres. He knelt down, leaned against the wall, fell down on the ground, talked philosophically, then wildly. At last, in the midst of up-

roarious laughter from the audience, he showed how they managed a death scene in the Royal Theatre in Berlin. Klaus had quite forgot his grief. Although he had just come from a death-bed, the man's presentation of death did not make him think of his own sorrow. Quite carried away, he looked on wide-eyed at the spectacle.

The actor, out of breath but with proud mien, got off at the next station. The tall, imposing man, the one with the good conscience, took his meerschaum out of the corner of his mouth and said, "What a clown!" They all looked at him just as they had before, with the utmost respect. He was decidedly the silent centre of interest for the whole coach.

A young farmer sitting beside him had the courage to try to draw him out a bit. He spoke of wind and weather and crops, and asked whether he might, perhaps, be a landowner. The tall man shook his head. Then the young man began to talk about all kinds of crafts, trades, and business, but he could get nothing out of him. The farmer had to get out at the next station, and would have liked to take home with him the position and life history of this big, imposing man with the meerschaum. There was nothing for it but to ask him outright what he was. So he asked. The big man removed the meerschaum a little way from the corner of his mouth. "I'm the midwife's husband," he said, and went on smoking. The young farmer bit his lips in vexation. As he got out he cast a long look at the big man. Then the big man got off too. Klaus Baas didn't quite understand the situation at the time, but it made such an impression on him that he never forgot it. Whenever afterward he met a big, composed man, with an especially good conscience, he always recollected this experience, and he was always dubious as to whether it were not "the midwife's husband." The experience stood him in good stead later, when he was a merchant, and an almost daily visitor at the Adolfsplatz.

The people kept getting off until the compartment was almost empty. At last only one very fat little man was

left, and he was asleep ; so Klaus had time to study him exhaustively. It seemed to Klaus that there was a certain underlying viciousness in his face. He imagined that he might wake up and declare that his pocketbook had been stolen. Or it was possible—he was so fat—that he might have a stroke of apoplexy, and fall down from his seat dead ; he was sitting there in such a queer way, with his hands clasped over his fat belly—just the way toads put their hands when they die. Everybody would say that he, Klaus, had throttled him, although, for his part, he couldn't even bear to think of putting his hand on that lump of fat. He thought the story out in every detail—to its bitter end on the scaffold. What would become of the sixty-seven marks then ? And what a blow for his mother ! He stood up by the window and counted the stations. How relieved he was when it was time to get off and he could escape all that misery ! He threw one glance back at the fat man. Thank God, he was still alive ! But he left the station with averted eyes.

It happened to be the time of the annual fair in the little town. Without looking to right or left, however, Klaus asked the nearest way to his cousin's house. He had heard his father say casually that he was a good sort of fellow, and imagining that the cousin, who was a shoemaker, would live in a nice little house like all those around him, he was much disconcerted when he was directed to the yard of a wretched old low house.

His cousin, sitting half dressed on the side of his unmade bed, was looking morosely over at his workbench under the window. When he heard who his visitor was, and learned that Jan Baas was dead, he shook his head dismally. "So—so," he said. "So he's dead and gone, is he? Well, don't let's talk about it. And now you're taking a little trip to help you forget your trouble. And aren't you lucky to get here just at fair time. If you hadn't come I'd perhaps have gone back to bed again, because I've no money to spend—not a single groschen or even a pfennig. But now of course I must see that you have a good time."

Klaus Baas tried to say that he hadn't much time and that he had to call on other relatives. But the shoemaker shook his head steadily and made a mighty gesture with his arm. "You are my guest!" he said. "Duty and love of kindred call me to the fray." He finished dressing in a hurry, put an old funny paper into Klaus's hand and went out of the room. Klaus Baas stared at the paper. "Oh, if I could only get away," he thought. "But perhaps he'll have four or five marks for me when I tell him why I've come." Just then he heard an old woman in the next room scolding loudly. "Money again? Money, money all the time!" That kept up for a while. Then the cousin came back, scratching his head as he came in. He studied the ten-mark note in his hand, and put it in his pocket. "Well—now I guess we're ready to go," he said, suddenly regaining his spirits.

The shoemaker cousin had the keenest kind of interest in everything the fair had to offer. He stopped in amazement in front of the woman who sang tales of horror to the grinding of the hand-organ; nothing could keep him from beholding the strongest man in the world—a spectacle that cost the two of them forty pfennigs. And from the truthful James, who was loudly extolling all kinds of wares, he bought a regular sheaf of long lead pencils, which he thrust into his breast pocket, from which they stuck up high. Once in a while Klaus began to tell about his father's illness and how much it had cost. But every time he began, his cousin opened his eyes so wide that his brows were hid under his thick tuft of hair. "Don't let's talk about it," he said. "Don't let's talk about it, cousin. I can't bear to listen to things like that. I begin to cry right away. I'm such a soft-hearted thing. Come along."

He greeted all kinds of young people from the country and from town. With many of them he stood talking for half an hour or so, usually about some merry excursion or other. And each time he pointed to Klaus Baas, who was standing right behind him. "I'd have stayed home to work to-day," he said, "but my cousin's here, from Hamburg.

And so I had to pull on my boots and come out whether I wanted to or not." Every half hour or so they went into a tavern, where his cousin drank a huge glass of beer, and Klaus a glass of lemonade, which gradually lost its taste for him.

At noon they ate lunch standing up in front of a sausage booth, where they were calling, "Hot sausages! Here you are for hot sausages!" Of the ten marks there were only six left; and it was getting dark. Klaus Baas became worried. Standing there with his sausage on a wooden plate in his hand, he told his cousin that his mother was a good, industrious seamstress, but that his father had been sick for four months, altogether. His cousin lifted his eyes again. "Don't let's speak of it. I'm not strong enough, cousin," he said. "I'll begin crying right here in front of the sausage counter."

Then Klaus took heart again. Every time they spent anything, he looked over his cousin's sleeve to see how much money was left. The cousin was indefatigable in sightseeing and drinking. At last he began to babble a bit and to sing. There were still three marks left. Then Klaus Baas seized him by the sleeve on the side the money was on and explained the situation plainly. They were standing just behind a menagerie booth among all kinds of boxes and cases in which snakes and other reptiles were housed. The shoemaker sat down at once on one of the cases. "My God," he said, disconsolately, "what a sad place this world is!" And then, lost to everything, he began to cry. "This world is a vale of tears. Oh, your poor, poor mother! But what can I do for her? And what have I got to do with her troubles? I am the unhappiest creature in the world myself. I have no wife, no child, no money, and I can't even stick at anything very long. Oh, woe, woe!"

Klaus Baas looked down at him for a while, then turned and walked off. Turning around again at the corner of the square he saw him, by the slight flickering gleam of the red street-lantern, still sitting on the box of snakes. He had both hands clasped over his head, which was sunk

almost to his knees. Klaus looked at him wide-eyed, and then went on, in silent astonishment.

As he walked along the street in the darkness, he saw that there were still many wagons from the country in the lighted yard of the tavern, and he asked the servant, who was just gearing up a till cart, whether any of the wagons was going to Eckebeek. The man answered that the only one that was going was the one he was just getting ready, but that all the places in it were taken.

Klaus stepped back hopelessly. Just as he was about to start out on the unknown road on foot, five or six young couples came out of the tavern, laughing and joking. They crossed the courtyard and began to climb into the wagon. The last one, a girl, refused to get in. "I'm going to stay all night with my aunt," she said, laughingly. "I haven't got any lover, and I don't want to sit just with people that have."

Then the servant pointed out Klaus Baas, who was still standing in the shadow. "There's a beau for you," he said. "He would like to go along—he wants to get to Eckebeek."

The couples in the carriage laughed. "Take him," they said, "and then you'll have one, too."

She went up to him, laughing, and saw that he was a nice, slim boy. "But he has such terrible serious eyes," she said in amazement. "Come right along," she said gently, with real tenderness; "don't you be afraid." With that she led him to the wagon and made him get in.

When the heavy wagon had started, with much rattling and bumping, she asked him kindly how he happened to be travelling and what he was going to do. She sympathized with him deeply, with many an "Oh, Lord, you poor little fellow! And going around all alone! Yes, it's always the same thing—that horrid, horrid money!" After a while one of the young folks put out the little lantern hanging from the roof of the wagon. Then there were great carryings on. Several couples sat holding each other's hands and whispering secrets and kissing. Others made all kinds of jokes, and began to insist that



the young girl with Klaus ought to kiss her sweetheart. She had distinctly called him that, and if he wasn't that, then they didn't belong in that company of lovers. They called to the driver to stop and put those two out.

She defended herself, answering them back laughingly. But when they kept it up, she said at last, "Well, what's the harm — we don't mind doing them the favor." And she put her arm around him and kissed him. Klaus was puzzled by the queer people you meet when you travel — such as a shoemaker who was absolutely gay and then turned around and cried; and now a girl who was so quiet at first and then kissed him. He submitted to it gravely.

Gradually the moon disappeared and the night grew darker. The jokers grew tired and fell asleep, and the lovers grew more ardent. Then the girl got out her supper, which consisted of a good piece of black bread, and divided it with Klaus. As she put each piece in his mouth she kissed him, saying comically, "You have a nice smell of black bread, little chap." After having been hungry all day, and having drunk so much lemonade, Klaus thought the good substantial bread tasted very good indeed. He felt very comfortable resting against the arm she had thrown around him. "You have a nice smell of bread, too," he said.

At the edge of the village she got out with him and led him through the darkness up a narrow path, past some thatched houses, to where her mother lived. She explained briefly who her companion was, and asked her mother to let him sleep on the sofa. Then she went to the place where she worked. Klaus passed the night very comfortably.

Next morning he started off bright and early to find his uncle, who had a little place not far from the village. He found a bare new house, surrounded by an untidy yard. He went in, feeling terribly depressed by his errand all the time. There was no one to be seen, either in the hall, in the bare kitchen, or in the stuffy little sitting-room. He opened another door and looked into an unpromising,

empty-looking room, in which a very old woman was lying in bed. She raised her head and asked who was there. He gave his name, and went on to say that his father was dead and that he was going around to their relatives to get some assistance for his mother. She raised herself with difficulty by a cord hanging from the ceiling, and tried to study him out with her half-blind eyes.

“They’re all out on the moor cutting peat; and,” she added, with a shake of her head, “they aren’t looking out for their relations, child.”

He sat down on the chair beside the door, and asked shyly whether she was the grandmother. “No,” she said; “I’m a Baas, to be sure, but I’m only distantly related to them. I was alone in the world and I had saved up six hundred marks of my earnings. I made them over to these folks, and in return they were to take care of me till I died. I was sickly then, and they thought I’d hang around for about a year and then die. But my trouble went to my legs and I got lame. And now I’ve been lying here—a burden to them—for fifteen years. I was eighty-eight last Christmas. Oh, life’s very bitter! They’re in good enough circumstances,” she said, shaking her head again, “but they’re not looking out for their relations, child. It won’t do you any good.”

Klaus Baas looked with wide eyes upon this ancient bit of wreckage of his family. Then he got up quietly and went out.

For several hours he hung around the house, looking over the fields in every direction, hoping and yet fearing that they would come back from the moor. At last they came—the husband and wife, and the two children, just of an age to go to school. They listened pretty coolly as he told them why he was there, and they left him standing out in the yard. After a while his uncle came out again to the well, and asked him whether he wasn’t going to see the pastor in Bindorf, his uncle once removed. He was the one that had owned those yellow books. If he was going there, he ought to start, for it was at least a three hours’ trip. Klaus said that he had rather not go

there; he didn't know whether the pastor had known his father. Well, his uncle said, he could make up his mind about that any way he liked; but he had to go back to the moor; and he went.

Klaus stood disconsolately beside the well, hesitating whether to tell his aunt again about his mother's great trouble. Just then she came out of the kitchen, and said that she wanted to send one of the children to the store, and she had no change. Did he happen to have any? He pulled out his little purse and gave her the eleven groschen he had left. When she gave them to the child she whispered something in its ear. The other one took a fancy to the purse, and when the mother said, "You can have it to play with," it took the purse and ran back to the kitchen with her.

A little later she came out to the well again and urged him to start. "If you don't," she said, "it will be night before you get to Bindorf." Klaus was sure now that she had cheated him out of his money. But, ashamed for her, he only cast his eyes down and started off.

It was a bad road to travel—sandy, with banks on both sides, and Klaus was hungry and discouraged. He was sternly confronted with the necessity of going into a pastor's house and asking again for money there. Once in a while he stood still and debated whether he shouldn't turn around and go back to his mother. But then came the slight hope that through some strange turn of fortune he might be able to get the money yet. He walked along over a high barren country, through several little villages and scanty fir woods, and then came down upon a moor. Soon a young peasant driving an empty peat wagon stopped and asked him cheerily to get in and ride. Klaus clambered up, and answered his questions about where he came from and where he was going. When he had heard about Hamburg and about the pastor, the young peasant didn't hold back either, but told Klaus about his three years' service in the Guards in Berlin, about his three children, and his brood-mare.

And so they rode along comfortably in the rattling

wagon across the moor and on to higher land again. As they were going past a dark wood, several bright-haired children came toward them across a strip of heath that ran along in front of the wood. They were carrying little hazel twigs hung with yellow catkins, and were trying to tickle each other's faces with the twigs as they came through the high grass toward the road home. When they got near the wagon the peasant said that he thought he spied the pastor's daughter among them. "Isn't Pastor Garbens's daughter there?" he cried out. At that a robust, well-grown girl, wearing a short dress, sprang up and said, in an easy, natural way, "I'm Suse Garbens. What is it?" as she brushed back the bright hair the wind was blowing over her forehead.

"I'm Klaus Baas from Hamburg," said Klaus, much embarrassed. "Your father and my mother are relatives, and I wanted to visit you for a day." "Is that so?" she said, brightly, accepting the situation at once. "Then just you sit still — I'll get up there with you."

And before he knew it she had climbed up over the wheel and was sitting beside him, while her companions scrambled up behind.

She looked straight into his eyes and said, "My father will be glad to hear something about you. He likes to get news of the family once in a while. He often talks to me about it."

The farmer nudged him. "You see!" he said, "you'll get a good welcome."

She asked him how he had come here from Hamburg, what school he went to, and how many brothers and sisters he had. And she said everything in a fresh, cheery way, sitting close to him, her eyes and her breast right before him. He listened and answered shyly.

At the edge of the village they got out of the wagon and went along the street of the rather imposing village, till they had nearly reached the church. "There's where we live," she said, pointing to a good-looking thatched house shaded by broad lindens. Klaus's heart sprang into his throat. "Now it's coming," he thought. The pastor

would certainly say — as pastors always did — “ Well, my son, what can I do for you ? ” Then he would have to tell everything at once, this, that, and the other; “ and now my mother is in trouble, and she needs sixty-seven marks. ”

They went through the big dark hall. With a gesture evidently natural to her, she flung her hat down on the table and cried, “ Father ! stop reading that stupid newspaper and come here. Just see who’s come ! ”

A rather young looking man, with a soft brown felt hat on the back of his head, came toward them pleasantly from the door. “ Now, ” Suse said, “ of course you think it’s somebody that wants a baptism certificate or something like that. Well, it isn’t. Or you think a new family has moved into the village and that this is one of them. Well, it isn’t. Or you think he’s lost his way and just run in here like that shepherd dog a few weeks ago. Well, he didn’t. He meant to come here. And he belongs here too. Yes — now you can just see what comes of reading the newspapers, when you can’t tell who it is by just looking at him. Why, when you were a student you danced with his mother. She was very haughty and uncivil. And then you asked her name, and found she was your cousin. Now do you know ? ”

“ Child ! ” said the pastor, “ what are you saying ? Is this Antje Baas’s son ? You have a good mother, my boy. And your father’s a good man. I only saw the two of them once in my life, but I remember them very well, and have asked about them whenever I had the chance. Well, this is fine, Suse. Come, let’s have supper at once. And we’ll have a nice, comfortable time. ”

She took hold of Klaus’s arm in her friendly way, and took him into the living-room. She pushed up a chair for him, set a place for him beside her at the table, and gave him his bread and milk herself. Her full, pretty face was always close to his. “ Father, ” she said, “ have you noticed what pretty hair he has ? He’s about as tall as I am. ”

“ Yes, ” said her father, “ and have you noticed how nice and neat his clothes are ? Haven’t I always said that his parents would get somewhere in the world ? ”

They were getting along in the village. And when I happened to hear a year ago that they had moved to Hamburg, I said at once, 'Those people will get along.' Thrifty people always get along in Hamburg — that's an old saying."

Suse looked at him sweetly, quite lost in contemplation of his happy state. "Have you got a garden?" she asked; "a big one or a little one?"

At this moment Klaus couldn't possibly have spoken of distress and death. "Only very rich people have gardens in Hamburg," he said with great seriousness.

"Well," she said, relieved, "then you aren't rich."

Her father laughed, enjoying it immensely. "They aren't rich, Suse," he said. "How could they be? But they're earning a good deal and they'll have money some day. Good people always get money in Hamburg — it's an old saying."

"If your father and mother get along," said Suse, "you must be a landowner. It takes money for that. Father and mother have money. Wouldn't you like to be a landowner?"

"Yes," he said, "I'd like to, and it's very likely I shall decide to be one."

"That's right," said Suse's father. "If your parents get along there in Hamburg and accumulate means, you must go back to the country again and be a farmer. That's the right way to make a healthy people."

"Yes," Klaus Baas said more firmly, "I've always thought I'd like to be a landowner ever since I was a little boy. And I'm going to put it through."

"Then you must come here in our neighborhood to study — or no — you must go to the agricultural school in Hohenwestedt. Isn't it fine, father, that we've got such nice relatives in Hamburg? Your father and mother must let you keep a horse when you're in Hohenwestedt so that you can ride over to see us every Sunday. Oh, joy! won't that be fine!" Then she asked him what school he went to — the grammar school?

"No, the intermediate," Klaus said, lying on with hot

cheeks, and talking about natural history and English. With such talk as this they finally finished supper. Then in came the mother, a thin, light-haired woman. She was not altogether pleased to see the guest; indeed, she looked at him a little coolly. Suse told her that her cousin was going to be a landowner and study at Hohenwestedt. "Is he?" she said, growing a bit scornful. "That means money." Suse's father, to be sure, said, "They're getting along very well in Hamburg," but the mother refused to join in their good time, and merely said, "Well, that's very fine, but let's stop making plans now and go to bed. Let him wash his feet in the kitchen and then show him his bed in the attic."

They said good night to the father and mother, and Klaus followed Suse out to the kitchen. She brought him water and everything he needed, then seated herself on the kitchen table and talked to him about what she did and what she was interested in while he washed his feet. Couldn't he stay several days? She would show him the whole village and the colts and pigs on the neighboring farms. In the enthusiasm of planning all this, she slid off the table, and kneeling before him while he washed his feet talked away, with her yellow head propped on her hand. He had little to say in return; he was thinking anxiously about the next day.

Then she took him up to the attic, turned down the covers from the white bed, and sitting down on the floor with her back against the wardrobe, talked on and on. The next time he came — oh, couldn't he spend the summer vacation with them? It was too nice for anything that he had come, and wasn't it fine that her father and mother thought she was in bed long ago, while she was sitting there having such a delicious talk? Klaus only half heard what she said. He undressed and climbed cautiously into the white bed while she still chatted away. Gradually her questions and stories grew less frequent, and then she fell asleep. He heard her distinct breathing. Then he raised himself a little and desperately surveyed his situation. It was as clear as daylight that

he could get no money in this house. He couldn't possibly tell these happy, hospitable people that he was poor and in need. And then he had lied! He shook his head and looked disconsolately around the room. Suse was sitting with her knees drawn up and her head resting on them, and the blue-gray light of the clear spring night lay on her hair hanging loosely over her shoulder and knee.

He stuck his legs cautiously out of bed, dressed himself again very softly, and took his boots in his hand. Then he slipped past the sleeping child down the stairs and out the kitchen door. He hastily drew on his boots on the bench under the great linden. Then he started off in the darkness toward Heisterberg.

There was neither moon nor stars, yet the night was so clear that he could plainly see sometimes two, sometimes three wagon tracks winding along the broad road. And he could distinguish every clump of heather at the side, and every twig of the sparse young birches. In earlier centuries the road had been the highway of the great commerce between north and south, though now it had long been supplanted by the railroad. Straight, broad, far removed from the villages, it made its lonely way through the country, an ancient, lonely traveller. Alongside of it the bushes and heather grew in wild profusion, and here and there was a tree which no one had planted.

From his early days Klaus had heard the grim old stories connected with this old "Heerstrasse." He pulled out his penknife and held it in his hand ready for a thrust. Once in a while, in a field near by, or sometimes right on the road, there was a house, usually a new one that had been built by a settler, in among some small thin firs. When he came to one of these, Klaus walked more slowly, to enjoy the sensation of having some one near. And when he had passed it, he hurried again to get over the waste place. Once he was terribly frightened by a tall dark thing standing in the path just in front of him. With his heart beating like a trip-hammer, he made a big circle around it, with his knife in his hand. And then he discovered that it was a horse, peacefully grazing. An



hour later there came toward him a big heavy wagon drawn by three powerful horses. He saw by its strong, substantial make that it was a wood or peat wagon, coming from the marsh; and so he knew it must be near morning. And he was not sorry. A stronger, colder wind arising half an hour later showed that morning was coming. Klaus began to recognize the neighborhood; and just before dawn he reached Heisterberg, footsore and weary.

He crossed the main street, and went straight up to the farm where his brother worked. Walking around the house, he discovered a light in a low window next to the stable door. He went up to it and saw his brother standing in his shirt and stockings in front of his chest, combing his hair carefully with one hand and holding a piece of broken glass in the other. Before every stroke he dipped the big broken comb into a brown earthen basin of water standing on the chest. Klaus rapped on the window. "I'm here," he said, "your brother Klaus."

Peter Baas opened the window. "Come in," he said, putting out his hand. When Klaus was inside Peter sat down on the chest, still holding the glass and the comb.

"I'm an unlucky fellow," he said. "I knew I'd have another stroke of bad luck to-day. Last year at this time the brown gelding stepped on my foot. And the year before that, when I was putting tar on the roof, I came mighty near falling off it. Tell me right away what it is. Is anything the matter with mother? Has she done anything to herself? Or has she done for one of you?"

Klaus Baas told him that his father was dead, and told him how he had died. Peter Baas had laid down the comb and glass. He sat bent over, with his hands between his knees, looking straight in front of him without saying a word. Klaus went on to tell him about how they needed money, and about the useless trips he had made yesterday and the day before.

Peter Baas listened carefully. Then he got up, opened a narrow rattling door made of rough boards. "Trina, come here," he said in a contained voice, with all the dignity of his eighteen years.

A large, well-built girl of sixteen or seventeen, with damp, smoothly combed hair, came in at once. She had on her chemise and underskirt, and was holding her dress in her hand. She looked closely at the visitor, but said nothing. Sitting down on the edge of the bed, she began to curl around her finger the little bit of hair she had just combed out. Peter Baas told her what had happened, and said that his mother needed sixty-seven marks. She looked at him calmly all the time. When she had finished twisting the hair she stood up, threw her dress skirt over her head, fastened it around her waist, and said coolly, "There's no question about it, Peter; of course we must give them the money."

It almost took Klaus's breath away. "Have they really as much money as that?" he thought.

"Yes," said Peter; "well, then, you bring it here, Trina."

Peter slowly put on his vest and stable jacket, while Trina went to the bed to look in the mattress under the pillow. Klaus Baas looked wide-eyed at the bed, and would have wondered more to see the dents of two heads in the gay red bolster, if his thoughts had not gone back immediately to the money. Trina brought out an imposing purse of English leather, wrapped round with twine and knotted fast to the bedpost. She slowly began to loosen the knots with her hands and teeth. Then Peter held out his hands and she counted the thalers and marks into them. When the number was reached they both drew a deep breath. "There they are," they said.

"Put in two more thalers," said Peter.

When he had the two, they looked at each other—Klaus Baas never forgot the two serious, reflective faces—then she said, "We must give it all to him; they certainly can't have anything to eat." She put her hand away down into the purse, drew out the last coin, and laid it with the others. "Well," she said, "he can just as well take the purse with him too."

That seemed to strike Peter hard. "Take the purse?" he said slowly, giving her a long look.

“I’ll make a new one this evening,” she said.

Peter tied up the bundle about seventeen times with cord as thick as his finger. At last he made a noose and hung it over his brother’s shoulder. While he was doing this, and admonishing Klaus about every misfortune and every vice known to man, Trina was satisfying Klaus’s hunger with a big chunk of bread and a basin of coffee.

Then Peter said, still looking apprehensive, “How you’ll ever manage with mother I don’t know. I think it would be better to say that a rich Jew gave you the money, or something like that. For when she hears that her son gave it, she’ll fling it at your head. My goodness, there’s a woman for you! Look out she doesn’t work herself to death—and keep your head high. I suppose I might go and see her some time, and see how she’s getting along; but I don’t know—I always have such bad luck with her.” Then they shook hands with him and let him out the stable door.

He walked past the hedges, along the main street, listening to the familiar sounds—the click of a door here and there, the rolling of wheels, or the comfortable lowing of cattle in the stalls. When he had reached the high ground, from which one can get a view of the whole village, he found there one of those trestles used to prevent traffic on worn-out sides of the road. He sat down on it, holding fast with both hands to the bundle on his lap, and looked down upon his birthplace, lost in vague thoughts, and struck by the vast loneliness and silence. From afar he heard in his ear the tumult of the great city, and he felt an impulse gently drawing him toward it, as toward a stronger and a brighter life.

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When he reached home, toward evening, he found the three children standing around the fireplace. Hanna’s great, strangely grave eyes were fixed upon the pan in which the beans were cooking. The two little ones were standing one on each side of her, and very close. In token of mourning, they had on dark neckerchiefs, which

had been hastily dyed black; the dye came off so badly that their necks were a sort of purple.

When Hanna told him that their father was being buried, and that their mother was at the funeral, he said loftily, "I know. That's why I came back to-day. I had a matter to attend to for father." Then he went through the flat to see that it was in order. Their mother would sew steadily now, he said, and he would earn money, too. Tired out, he sat down on the chair by the window with the bundle of money on the window-sill beside him and waited anxiously for his mother to come.

She came back from the grave pale and cold as ice. When she saw him sitting there, she straightened up a little and said in a relieved voice, "It's good you're back."

Klaus stood up and gave her the bundle. "Peter wants to be remembered to you," he said; "he sent this along by me."

When she took the package in her hand and saw how heavy it was, her face turned very red, and she carried the package into the other room. After a while she came out again and went out of the house, without doubt to pay her debt.

The next day Klaus went to the artist's to tell her what had happened and to say that he would have to look around for some other work that would take his whole time. But he found the door locked.

On the following Sunday he was confirmed. There was no money for new clothes, so Antje Baas brushed and brushed the old suit, with a set face. To have the boy she loved passionately go to church on his confirmation day in an old coat was bitterly unendurable to her — as her husband's death had been. As Klaus reached the street Kalli Dau was coming out of the shop door. He had on his shabby, poverty-stricken Sunday clothes, in which he looked especially little and thin. But, assured and self-possessed as usual, he told Klaus how he had darned up the holes in the sleeve himself, his mother having had no time for it. "That's a family for you!" he

said. He looked starved, and there was an old, sober look in his dark eyes.

In church they sat with the rest in their place and regarded the whole performance as they would have regarded a play at a theatre. In the pastor's instructions they had heard nothing that sounded especially grand or beautiful, and what they had heard they had not believed. They went mechanically through the silent part they had to play before the altar.

They walked home through genuine sloppy Hamburg weather. They turned up their coat collars and slipped along the walls of the houses. Now and then they said something about their plans. Kalli Dau's father and mother wanted him to go on helping in the business, so that they could loaf around, as Kalli said. But if he stayed it would be on account of his two little brothers, who would go to the dogs without him. Still he didn't know whether he could hold out any longer with that wretch of a stepfather. Klaus Baas didn't unburden himself further. He took long decided steps and his face was very grave. He only said casually that the first thing he had to do was to earn a hundred marks by some means or other. And then he would go in with a storekeeper and learn the business.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE next day the weather was even sloppier. A damp west wind was spitting a steady little sprinkle of rain on houses, streets, wagons, and people, and the air was so full of gray mist that no one remembered that there was blue sky behind it; people had forgot what the sun looked like. Klaus had all sorts of things to see to at home in the morning, so that it was afternoon when he could go to Kalli Dau's.

When he got to the door of the flower shop—it was always open—and curved out cautiously around the door, he saw his little friend scratching and biting his step-father, who was trying to lay him over his knee. Klaus had just time to jump to one side as Kalli Dau flew out past him like a ball into the gutter. He got on to his miserable little legs again in an instant and made for the other side of the street. The great black man, whose face was bleeding, came to the door and yelled for a policeman; people ran to their doors and windows, and a policeman started up from the Grossneumarkt. Kalli Dau, seeing all this, thought that it was time to get away, and trotted off around the corner.

Hiding in a doorway, and spying out now and then, they talked about what they had better do. The council was short. "I'm not going to let myself be jugged," said Kalli Dau, "and then let that big fellow murder me afterward; you go get my stuff, and my papers, and the money under the flower-pot."

Klaus Baas ran back. Standing on the other side of the street, he called over to ask whether he could have the things.

Kalli's mother appeared. "What does he want with

them?" she called across. "Is he going to sea? I'll tell him one thing: if he gets crippled at it, he'll never come inside my door again."

"Crippled?" Kalli Dau said—he had slipped up cautiously behind Klaus, and was standing some distance off. "I don't need that to cripple me; you've made me a cripple already! Just look at my legs once! Before I'd come back home again, I'd jump overboard."

She went back into the shop, and came out again with Kalli's things, bundled up in a red checkered cloth, a handful of silver, and some papers, all of which she gave to Klaus Baas, saying, without looking up, "Tell him to behave himself." Then she went in again, looking rather downcast.

They went along the Baumwall to the Reiherstieg, where there was a three-master whose second mate Kalli Dau knew. The last gang of workmen had just left the schooner; the two small cables were already being run along the sides. Kalli Dau pushed by, nevertheless, and said to the captain, holding out his papers: "Take me with you. I can make coffee, and I can climb like a cat, and I can—" but the first officer was already standing on the gangway—he filled it up completely—talking to the captain.

The captain looked down on the little fellow. "I have two cabin-boys already," he said; "you're too small, anyhow."

Kalli Dau still stood there, looking up dumbly with his dark eyes.

"What else does the fellow want?" the first officer said, taking him by the shoulders and shoving him back. "Go over to that Norwegian bark, you little crab! maybe you'll get a place there."

They got off the gangway and ran across.

The little bark, which lay close up to the dock, had been unloading redwood, and the deck was still covered with it. The captain and the mate, elderly, bearded men, were sitting smoking on the half deck in front of the cabin. They looked up pleasantly as Kalli Dau, leaning

down from the dock and talking almost into their faces, began to tell the story of his life. He dropped his bundle and showed them the weals on his arm; and when he saw that they did not understand him, he patched it out with gestures and words of English.

They looked at each other, shaking their heads, and said, enraged, "And him such a little cub, too!" They questioned him and Klaus pretty sharply to find out whether Kalli's story was true. Then they took his papers. While the captain was reading them, Kalli tried to make an impression on the mate with his gleaming eyes. "I can make coffee—I can tie a bowline knot—I can climb like a cat."

The captain took another look at him. "Well, then," he said, in his pleasant singsong, "you come along, we're going to Canada."

Kalli Dau, without a word, nodded to Klaus Baas, jumped on board with one spring, and disappeared in the forecabin.

Klaus Baas looked after him, wide-eyed. As Kalli did not come back, he turned around quietly, went back to the ferry, and rode across to the Baumwall again.

The wind had died down. Klaus, feeling altogether abandoned, went along the harbor in the dull, sloppy weather, toward the Kajen, wondering what he would do now without Kalli Dau's advice.

As he was going along the railing of the embankment, he ran into Jonni Dau, standing there in his dirty, run-over shoes, his hands buried in his torn pockets, shivering, coughing, and staring stupidly out over the street. When he saw Klaus Baas, he said, "Well, have you handed my brother over to somebody? He'll get more than he bargained for at sea, and that's no joke."

Klaus Baas looked out over the water. "He's over there on a Norwegian bark, at the Reihertstieg," he said. "Won't you go over to see him once more?"

Jonni looked down at Klaus without understanding him. "Why, what's there to see in him?"

Klaus Baas said nothing. Then he conquered himself,



and said, "I want to get some work. I want to earn some money right away. Do you know of anything?"

"Will you give me a glass of kmmel?" Jonni said.

Klaus Baas shook his head and started on.

Jonni Dau shifted his weight lazily to the other leg. "You'll have to do like me," he said; "work now and then so as to get something to booze with. If you can't get along without working, be a kettle-mender, or join the street-cleaners' brigade. You can always get a job there."

Klaus stared out in front of him. He knew how things went with that kind of people. He turned away sadly and went on.

He crossed to the other side of the street, where the houses would shelter him from the rain. Near the Maaten-twiete he came to a place where they were tearing down a lot of old houses along a canal. Klaus looked at it with boyish curiosity, and then went in to take shelter under a half torn down wall by the canal. He sat there wondering helplessly, looking out over the wet confusion of ships, wharves, piles, pontoons, and sloops. The water rolled up and down between them, and the little harbor steamers, sloops, and lighters ploughed along past one another. A large steamer going up the channel was making its way along among the little fellows crossing its path and demanding the right of way with its threatening roar. Klaus's heart was very heavy; the gloomy weather had some influence too. Wherever could he find work and money?

As he was staring out into the gloomy twilight, a rough voice from the canal below called, "You little idiot there! Haven't you anything to do? Catch hold of this!"

Klaus looked down and saw a short broad man in a barge filled with refuse from the buildings, trying to push it away from the wall and get it out into deeper water. Klaus looked around for a place to get down. He jumped on a cellar way that had been torn open, and slid down the man's sloping boat-hook into the barge. He grabbed up the other boat-hook that was lying by the edge, and

pushing with all the power he had against the wall, he helped to work the barge free. Then he helped to work it on. They worked along slowly under the bridge and then through a mass of sloops moored in the harbor. The broad-shouldered man did not say a word; he acted as if he had always had this assistant.

When they had reached open water, they kept at its edge, and were carried down by the ebb tide. The man was standing back on the cabin roof at the helm; his new helper was sitting on the deck at his feet, wearing an ancient gray oilskin, which the man had taken out of the cabin and thrown to him. Klaus was somewhat anxious about how the thing would come out; but the man's taciturn way was so like the slow, methodical workmen he had been used to all his life that he soon cheered up again. "This afternoon or to-night I'll surely have some money," he thought. So he took courage again and looked around him. A ferry-boat, crowded with workmen, passed them. In the growing darkness, the workmen's bodies looked like a dark mass, and their faces like white specks. A steamer coming up-stream sent a swell against their low edge, and splashed the waves up on it. Over from the city came the sound of wagons rolling along; but over on the other side, in the dark, confused masses of the wharves, not a single hammer was beating. Now and then a steamer whistled; the anchor-chain of a lighter rattled down; the water rippled and gurgled, and everywhere reddish lights shone through the mist.

By this time they had passed the Landungs-Brücke at St. Pauli. The lights were fewer; the noises were farther away; the water played and splashed more strongly against the boat. They slid past a lighter lying at anchor, the light from its lantern gleaming faintly over the slow, bright waves. A clear, pleasant voice called across cheerily, "Say, Hein, where are you going to dump that rubbish?" Klaus caught the joking tone in the question, and looked up suspiciously, but the big man above him said nothing; he did not even look around. They floated on for some time longer; then the taciturn man turned the

barge toward the south bank, sculling with the heavy oar. Slowly they glided over the dark green plain. Far off a low bright sandbar came in sight, and there they threw out the anchor.

Without saying a word, the man began to throw the rubbish over the edge into the water. Klaus seized the second shovel and imitated him. Shovelful after shovelful splashed over the edge. Klaus's body bent like a young willow, and his breath came heavy and hard. When he had worked away vigorously for a while, the man said, "Get your breath a while." Klaus stood still, leaning on his shovel for a few moments, and then went on working.

The monotonous work in the great broad silence made thoughts come and go like pictures, passing one after another in a silent train. How still and tired father's face was at the last—and it used to be so cheerful, and often so droll! and now it was absolutely still, in the grave!—What was mother doing now—she was probably still sitting at her machine, sewing, sewing, sewing, to get bread enough for her five children. If his schoolfellows at Heisterberg could only see him now, working this way, out in the middle of the water, at night! If brother Peter could see him! He'd open his eyes! He'd say, "What are you doing out there? I can do that better than you can!" Peter hoped for great things from him. Well, just let him wait! Just as soon as he got those ninety marks together, he'd show what he could do. How much would the man give him, five groschen, or maybe a whole mark? If he got a whole mark, he'd put away only half of it for Timmermann; mother should have the other half. Of course! for just now, at the beginning, they were really in need; afterward mother will manage it; she's so industrious and so capable! In thinking of these things, he had thrown himself at the work too vigorously; his breath came in hard gasps, and the palms of his hands began to hurt. The big man noticed it. "Take your time," he said. He brought out some tallow for Klaus to rub into his hands, and Klaus rested a while.

When they had finished, they brought the barge up close to the sand. The man brought bacon sandwiches and cold coffee out of the cabin, and gave Klaus as much of both as he wanted. They sat there without saying anything, eating away and looking out over the broad dark water and the gray sand-bank at the side.

Then they jumped out on the sandbar and began to fill the barge with the good white Elbe sand, which makes splendid mortar. It was heavy work, but Klaus helped as well as his strength and the painful blisters on his hands would let him. When they were done, they crept into the cabin and slept for several hours on the hard bench.

Before the day began to dawn, they started home. They put up the mast, ran up a little square sail, and hoisted anchor. As the tide rose, they floated off the sandbar. Aided by wind and tide, they slipped easily out of the Köhlbrand and back to the city. The still, clear night, the gurgling and gliding of the broad channel in which they were driving along, the hush that night brought to the great workshops of the harbor, the work and vigil, the strange man standing silent at the helm beside him, his family,—the living asleep in the little flat in Rademachersgang, and the dead asleep in the churchyard,—his whole short life, beautiful, and yet hard,—all this his impressionable boyish soul played about, seeing it all, in this great stretch of open, more clearly and distinctly than ever before. There was the lighter again, at the side, deep in the water, as if it were going to sink in; its light shone out far over the stream, like a glittering ribbon of pure gold. Somewhere there must be some great good fortune coming to him, he thought—it must be going to rise up like a golden light out of the depths. A large steamer, coming up with the tide, went slowly past them, looming up gigantic from the depths in which she was driving along. How many lights! That was the fore-castle—that the bridge—those seven lights in a row were in the cabin—suppose there was a stranger in there, a great proud man with a keen face, coming to visit them in

Rademachersgang. — The man had been in love with their mother years ago and had gone away and left her. That's why she was so harsh and queer—and that's why he, the third child, was different from the others—his mother had said once, in her unpleasant way, that he was the cleverest, and she treated him the most severely—and now this stranger was coming from far away—and to-morrow, why, no, it was to-day—now, when their need was the greatest, he would walk into their flat. And everything, everything, would turn to pure luck and gold. And he would be a country gentleman and buy himself a great, great estate and marry Suse Garbens; and Hanna, who was always playing school with the children, should go to the high school.

When the gray dawn came, the barge, full of beautiful sand, lay moored again at the cellarway by the fallen buildings. The man pulled out a leather purse and gave Klaus ten shining groschen—a whole mark. “Can you keep your mouth shut?” he asked curtly. Klaus nodded vigorously. “Come back to-night at seven!”

Klaus clambered ashore and ran home the shortest way, through the Herrengaben and through the network of alleys above the Grossneumarkt.

Antje Baas, who was standing on the hearth, said nothing. He told her what he had been doing all night; it had been lots of fun, he said, and the man was a very decent sort of fellow. He pulled the mark out of his pocket slowly with his stiff, blistered hand, and laid it down. She acted as if she did not see it.

While he was sitting at the window drinking his coffee, she said curtly, “I've got to get over this first part somehow; after that you've got to learn to be a storekeeper.”

“Time enough for that,” Klaus said good-humoredly. “First I'll get a little money together, so that I can buy another suit, and such things. After that I'll begin. I'm going out again to-night with the Old Wolf; it's lots of fun.”

He went out with the man every day now. When he went home after one trip was finished, he got his orders

when to appear again. Sometimes, when he came, he found the Old Wolf asleep in the cabin; if he did not find him there, he looked for him in the little tavern near the Westminster Hotel.

Once, in the beginning, when he could not find the man, he had to ask if he had been at the tavern. He could not give the man's name, and so he had to say, "He's a short, broad man, that never says anything."

Several men sitting there winked at him, and said, "Say — we don't know very much about him — do you both dump the rubbish in the Elbe?"

Klaus remembered, "Can you hold your tongue?" He stared at them, and said nothing.

Then they laughed, and said, "Go and lie down in the cabin. We'll tell Peter Sööt that you're there."

Usually, however, Peter Sööt was there, sitting alone at a table with a glass of steaming punch in front of him, dozing away.

They carried away rubbish from the houses all summer. Usually they worked in the daytime. They loaded the barge at the houses, pushed or floated along toward the Reiherstieg, where they threw the load out on the land; then they went to one of the sandbars, filled the barge, and came back again. But when a misty, rainy day came, and the tide served, they slipped down in the night to the Köhlbrand and dumped the rubbish in there, where the city had to dredge it out again. Then they loaded in their sand right there, and in the gray morning light the loaded barge was anchored by the houses. They always had good luck. Sometimes, in spite of night and mist and rain, a police boat happened to come up alongside, asking, "Well, Hein, where's that rubbish going?" or, "Where did that sand come from?" or, "What, out in the night and mist?" Then Peter Sööt gave them some curt, unfriendly answer — "Had bad luck!" or, "Ran aground!" or, "I can't sleep at night!" And they glided on through the night and the mist.

And so they pushed or drifted up and down the harbor. In the daytime they had to watch out carefully to make

their way through the rough water between the little steamers, lighters, and tugs ; but at night they could fall asleep, free from care, on the broad, empty stream. Sometimes Klaus saw the towers of St. Michael and St. Catherine towering above the roofs and glistening green in the sunlight ; and on other days he saw them floating through mist and rain. He saw the sun rise and saw it set ; in spite of all the smoke that lies over the harbor traffic, he saw it coming up so swiftly out of the water that he had to shade his eyes as he looked at it. He saw the soft moonlight light up the rigging of a great bark coming up the harbor so that it stood out against the clear night sky like a piece of wonderful embroidery. And he saw days and nights of a different kind, when the thick, dirty air lay over the harbor like a wet, gray sack. There were days when a gusty whirling wind chased such heavy squalls across the water that the steamers, which could not hear or see anything, whistled away at each other, and the choppy, dirty yellow waves splashed over the edge so frequently that Klaus stared first at the water that came in and then at Peter Sööt's face. Once, near the Köhlbrand, he spent a night that was so very still and when the sounds carried so far, that down below in the barge he could hear the captain away up on the bridge of an incoming liner ask the pilot as he came on board about the old Emperor, who was sick then. He saw a Bohemian woman sitting on the deck of a boat that had come from the upper part of the river, teaching her little brown-faced daughter to knit ; Klaus would have liked to talk to the little girl. And once he saw a heavy cask of palm oil smash down on the planks of the dock when the chain of the derrick broke ; then he heard the loud scolding of the workmen. He saw the young clerks standing in the barges, looking after the chests and bales as they slid down into the lighters. Klaus looked at them long and enviously ; if he could only be a merchant like that ! And he saw the hull of a new ship sliding down into the water, and wondered how they managed to make it swim so straight.

When his work was done, he went home the straightest way, where the Klefeker Strasse crosses the Schaarmarkt and the Herrengraben. In through there a wild feverish life went on from evening till toward morning. Jesting, drunken sailors from all parts of the world strolled around, and women leaned out of the windows of the brilliantly lighted rooms. Sometimes they threw evil jests at him, and sometimes the sailors stopped him; but he looked neither to the right nor the left, and got through it all safe and sound. It was not the fear of God that brought him through; it was his healthy youth, and the good blood in him, and the thought of his father and mother—particularly of his mother.

At home she was sitting with hard, set face at the machine, with cloth and all sorts of sewing materials heaped up all around her; and across from her sat a little creature helping. Sometimes one of the simple neighbor women was standing in the middle of the room, talking away or else decently silent, while her measures were being taken. She did not look up from her work when Klaus came home; she only looked over toward the hearth, which she could see from her chair, to see whether Hanna had heated up the coffee and set out the beans, so that Klaus should get his share.

When fall came, Peter Sööt got work for the barge at the Kleiner Grasbrook, near the place where the Kranhöft is now. Bad weather set in early and it was dark and bitter cold in the early mornings when he went through the still streets to the harbor: the damp wind blew in over the deck of the ferry-boat, crowded with workmen, so that he nearly froze, in spite of the thick pea-jacket he wore. Klaus tried to get a place beside the engine; he struck up an acquaintance with a deck-hand who was sitting on the engine in the lee of the pilot-house, with his knees drawn up, who nodded to him. He was a little fellow, with a great scar right across his mouth, that he had got by falling out of a window; he had been a venturesome little climber all his life. He wanted to be a sailor, but his mother, who was a widow, like Klaus's, still hoped to



keep him from it, and had made him promise to work a year on a ferry-boat first. Sometimes a horribly ugly, thin negro sat beside them, holding his thin, grayish blue hands over the heat, and looking pitifully cold in his thin clothes. They talked German and English to him, as well as they could; they talked about how much it cost to live, about his lodgings, about the ship that had brought him over from Liberia, and about his home. He had run away from a French ship, and had got work as a riveter.

Once, while the three were sitting there, two young clerks stood near them; they were going over, early as it was, to check up the chests and bales that their firm was shipping off. Seeing the curious, respectful glances that Klaus was throwing at them, they began, boylike, to boast a little about their firm and their commission. Klaus listened attentively, making pictures, as usual, about their work. Yes, that would surely be a good career, he thought. That would be something different from being a store-keeper! To sit in an office, to go across the sea, to order great quantities of goods and ship them off, to earn a great, great deal of money at it! But how could he ever get at it?

And then he ran along the piling to the place where the barge was moored, and they shoved it or let it float along. They always made their way alone, even in windy or rainy weather, and never had a tug to tow them across the choppy, dark green stream, over which the gray darkness of the sharp autumn night still lay. There was a horrible stir and bustle in the semi-darkness. The harbor was too small then for the growing traffic; over on the Grasbrook and Kuhwärder new docks were being built, but when would they be ready? A ferry-boat comes along toward them, steaming on in a grayish white foam, and shrieking out loud, agitated whistles; a broad tug drives along past them, with the water springing and bubbling around it. There's another tug, coming toward them; does it want to go straight on, or to cross over to larboard? It whistles shrilly twice, and turns slowly right into the channel; the barges slide past each other, bump-

ing hard as they go; the men scold back and forth angrily. A huge steamer looms up suddenly out of the mist and rain; it is lying in the middle of the channel on the larboard; there was no room for it at the docks, and it had to anchor out here. A little ferry-boat is lying beside it, its deck covered with stevedores. They begin to climb slowly up the iron ladders that hang down over its high slippery iron side; the two lines of men look like two black, many-legged caterpillars, as they crawl and climb up. There is a sharp cold wind blowing, and the rain splashes off from the iron wall straight into the climbers' faces; below them the water rushes and splashes. Klaus Baas, looking up at them, thinks, "If only they don't step on each other's hands—how slippery those wet ropes must be—their hands must be awfully stiff." A little steamer, trying to turn around, comes too near to the barge; Peter Sööt, standing at the wheel, cries out, "Look out there!" It was the first time he had spoken on that detestable morning. Klaus Baas shoves against the steamer's side with his boat-hook. Suddenly, from far up above on the ship's side, a clear, sharp cry rings out: "Hold fast, Tally-man!" At the very instant when Klaus looks up, a dark, miserable little figure drops out of the climbing line, falls back heavily, turning over as it goes, and plunges headlong into the dark foaming water. No boat is near; and besides, they can't see anything—and it is so bitterly cold—the other men up there climb on, more quietly, more hurriedly. Klaus Baas, pale and freezing, sits there on the bulwark, his legs under the tarpaulin, thinking. Who can he have been, that man that fell down there, floating along lifeless now in the dirty, icy water, like a piece of wreckage, driven against the sides of ships, torn by their whirling screws—perhaps he was a little shoemaker from some village who grew discontented with what he was making and came to Hamburg; or perhaps he was a little clerk from some little town who got out of work. They were waiting at home now for news about some good position, and what they would get would be the notice of his death. What a powerful steamer that is, coming along

slowly and majestically out of the Grasbrook harbor, with two tugs, straining on their cables, running along like terriers in front of it. She glides out slowly into the misty channel, and the tugs cast off. The giant ship, with a mighty roar, demands the right of way. What flag is that at her foremast? It is still too dark to see, and the rain makes it droop down heavily. Up above men are standing thick along the railing, with heads bent forward, staring silently at the rows of lights on the shore, that are getting paler as dawn comes, and at the houses and towers, vanishing slowly in the dark misty rain. Now the flag blows out a little — it is the star-spangled banner, of course. A little steamer passes them, going faster and closer than it has any business to; the swell it makes splashes heavily over the edge of the barge, and its steam spreads out like a cloud in front of them, so that they cannot see anything at all. Peter Sööt, irritated, makes his second speech for the day: “Damned old smoker!” he says. And so the daylight gradually comes. The whole harbor is dripping and full of mist; all day long the rain drips and trickles from poles and masts and spars, from smoke-stacks and bulwarks and planks and pontoons, until finally evening comes. Then it is time to stop work. And soon Klaus is standing in the dark, thick crowd of stevedores and dockyard men who are crowding by hundreds up the gangways of the little ferry-boats, wet and exhausted and silent. And then he trots off toward home.

But in spite of the gloom and darkness, the boy's soul is bright and warm. How bright and warm and beautiful! Even through such a gloomy, raw autumn day as this, the beautiful dream of a happy future glows. Perhaps the stranger will be sitting by the fire when he gets home to-night; perhaps Hanna will have a gold chain around her neck, and little Fritz, who is so fond of machinery, will be playing with a little steam-engine — just hear how it runs and hums! — and his mother, cheerful and happy at last, is petting the children — and then at last he will confess that he doesn't want to be a store-keeper at all, but a real merchant, with an office. And

how he will work then! He will work harder than any one ever did before — and will ship his goods all over the world.

So, in just the same way noble old races used to make for themselves — and still do make — gods that are nothing but idealized pictures of their loftier thoughts, and of the life that is unconsciously developing in them, just so did this child of a noble old race dream his dreams; he thought that he saw a personality and a power, beyond and outside himself, that was to bring good luck and great fortune to him and to his family. He did not realize that it was in himself that this power and personality were developing. His dreams were only stretches of his imagination, but they showed a power of thinking ahead and of planning out the future that belongs to a vigorous life and a powerful life's work. They were nothing but dreams; but at least their aim was not mere comfort in life, nor worldly fame; they were dreams of a broad, active life, and of stout service to the people he loved.

## CHAPTER IX

AT dusk one raw autumn afternoon they were pushing their way along by the warehouses on the Kleiner Grasbrook, to carry some freight over to the Grasbrook harbor. The gusty west wind and the constant passing of tugs and ferry-boats had made the water so rough that it foamed and splashed as though it were full of jumping fishes. A drizzling rain beat in their faces. For a while they kept close to the piers; but after a time they had to turn out into the main channel to pass a boat from the Oberland, or upper part of the river. Just then a larger steamer that was coming down toward them had to turn over toward their side. They couldn't get to the end of the Oberland boat; it stretched out endlessly on the larboard. The steamer came nearer — it came too near — it crushed the little barge against the Oberland boat and squeezed it down into the green, splashing water.

Klaus Baas saw Peter Sööt, taciturn as ever, make one long jump toward the Oberland boat's railing. He saw iron walls, bales of goods sliding down, and water foaming up; then down he sank into the whirl. He struck out with both hands and feet, and came up again unhurt. He got hold of a boat-hook held out to him and clambered up on the Oberland boat's deck. Standing there on a tarpaulin, he spat, shook himself, and dashed the water out of his eyes and mouth. A voice said calmly, "Now you'd better run home to mama;" some one else laughed, good-humoredly, and said, "It's Elias Regenworm himself!" Peter Sööt was standing at the railing staring down into the bubbling water, watching for some trace of the barge. The captain's wife stood there with her legs apart and her arms akimbo, too astounded to speak.

Klaus shook himself vigorously, taking it all in through his blinking eyes; then he looked around for a place where he could climb up the piling, started off suddenly, climbed up, and set out straight for home.

He forgot that he was wet and shivering with cold; he scolded at the steamer, at Peter Sööt, at the rascals that had laughed at him, at the captain's wife, at the bad taste of the water, and at the whole harbor. Not even ten horses could ever drag him down there again! Hadn't he got the ninety marks scratched together and handed over long ago? And he had laid in a new suit and new shoes, too! What was he doing there still? That might have ended pretty badly! Heaven save us! That damned water!

Shivering and scolding, he got home, told what had happened to him, and said he was done with it. His mother said curtly, "You're always getting into a mess, like all the Baases. Hurry into bed!" And she bent over her work again.

The next afternoon he said that he wanted to look around for some better kind of work. He put on his new suit, combed his hair wet and slick as usual, and had Hanna take a good long look at him. Then, walking a little stiffly, out of consideration for his new suit and his dignified new shoes, he went down toward the harbor, where he had noticed several offices near the Dovenfleet. He had a hazy idea that he could get a place of some sort as messenger boy, packer, apprentice, or something, that would give him some pay to begin with, as well as a chance to work up gradually into a better place.

He went timidly into the first office, a bare little room where three or four young men were sitting writing at a long broad table under the window. An elderly man who was going through the room came up to him, asked coldly what he wanted, and said shortly, "We have no opening."

Somewhat depressed, he went into the next house, climbed some dusty old stairs, and went cautiously into a low, badly lighted room, where a dozen young people

were sitting bent over their work. A big, solid, determined looking man, who saw him from a room at the side, came out and said, "What do you want? Have you references? What does your father do? What have you been doing since Easter? I haven't any work for you." Klaus Baas was going to say something more, but the man had turned his back to him already. And that was the way it was in the third office and in the fourth.

He gave it up for that day, as it was getting toward evening. He strolled along the harbor, and came to the Landungs-Brücke in St. Pauli, where David Strasse begins. The weather, that had been so wet and gloomy for weeks, had changed; it was a beautiful breezy autumn evening. Stretching himself, he went on cheerfully through the stream of men coming up, as he was, from the harbor. He was glad the weather was good, glad that his clothes were new, glad that he had his hard work behind him. And he looked around at everything.

At the corner of David Strasse and Spielbudenplatz an itinerant bookseller had spread out his wares on a long Scotch wheelbarrow. His hands deep in his pockets, he was strolling up and down before it. Two workmen, one old and one young, were standing there, their heads bent over a book. Klaus stopped and looked toward the books, thinking that he would like to rummage through them himself. And why shouldn't he? He had five marks in his pocket — money that he had earned himself. Hadn't he worked every day for eight months, without ever spending a penny on himself? Wasn't he sixteen years old? Couldn't he do anything for himself? Pick out a book, for instance, and buy it, and read it, as comfortably as you please?

He went a little nearer, conscious of having a little ready money. With his hands in his pockets, he looked down at the titles of the books. There was one thick one: "Stanley. In Darkest Africa." On the cover there was a long thin row of little black men, wandering through an endless grassy plain, with gigantic forests in the distance. That would be just the book for him. What a life, to

wander like that through a foreign land! And if a person couldn't do it himself, at least not yet — then at least reading such a book wouldn't make a person any stupider! It was only a mark. He drew his purse out and said soberly, "That book there!"

The dealer, an elderly man with a broad face and an untidy gray beard, who looked as if he drank, looked up at the tall boy and handed him the book, saying, "There now! A countryman of mine, and a good sort, too!"

Klaus Baas got red, and said hesitatingly, though with dignity, "How do you know that?"

The old man struck his breast and said loftily, "Wha-at? How do I know? I left the Tondern seminary with the grade of 'good'! What do you think of that? I was a teacher in Hohendamm for ten years! You're from the same part of the country; the way you talk betrays you!"

Klaus Baas thought it might be indiscreet to ask the man how he had got from Hohendamm, the quiet little village on the Elbe, to the Spielbudenplatz in St. Pauli. Somewhat reservedly, he said, "I am one of the Baases." When the man asked more questions, Klaus told him where he had just come from and what he wanted to do.

"Well, now," said the dealer, "are you pretty good at sentences? That's what it all depends on! I was the best scholar at the seminary — first in drinking and in sentences! Do you believe it? If you don't, just look at this book! Can you see? 'The Logical Construction of Sentences, with Examples,' — here's the author's name — do you see who it is? Dierck Vogt, teacher at Hohendamm" — he struck his breast again. "If you want me to," he said, "Dierck Vogt would do anything for a fellow-countryman — anything! Why, he'd share his bed and board with him! Stay a little longer, fellow-countryman — I'm a lonely man!"

This new acquaintance was interesting, of course; but he wasn't quite good enough for Klaus. He stayed, but he stood a little to one side. A troop of factory girls came chattering home from their work; sailors went past, their



hands in their pockets, short pipes in their mouths. Here and there in twos and threes came country people, looking around curiously; there went two street women. A groom from Holstein, with a halter thrown over his shoulder, looked after them. Then came a shop-boy out of work; a loafer; a little crowd of women going to the store—sickly people, grown old too soon. And all the while there was an endless stream of workmen coming up from the harbor.

Now and then one of the passers-by stopped, looked over the cart, took up a book, and either bought it or laid it down again. Just at this time people were growing more clear-eyed and sober, because of the extension and growth of industry which was throwing them together more closely and bringing them into a harder sort of reality. Most of the buyers hunted out wild tales, some even dissolute ones; but many a one reached seriously for one of the interesting new pamphlets that tore down old ideas or set up new ones. Several times, when the customer seemed to be dubious as to the value of a book, the old drunkard struck his dirty old coat again—its breast pocket was stuffed with papers—saying, “I only buy things I know about, gentlemen!” Or he would say good-humoredly, “An old teacher like me must know about that.” Several buyers knew him; they called him “persetter,” that honored old teacher’s name, into which the Low German villagers have corrupted “preceptor.” They listened gravely to his opinion. When there were no customers, he talked to Klaus Baas, who was standing by the wall, his hands in his pockets, apparently half unwilling to be there. In reality, however, after going around so absolutely dumb with Peter Sööt, he took great interest in listening to the old drunkard’s boasts about his seminary and his teaching and about what was in this or that book.

When the stream of workmen had stopped, the dealer asked his young fellow-countryman to help him pack up the books and to take supper with him. Klaus helped him pile up the books and then walked along, a little way

off from the cart, so that no one would think he belonged to it. The old man turned into the Silbersack and went into a courtyard, where they took out the books and carried them into a little room on the ground floor.

Then they went back to the Spielbudenplatz, and turned into a little inn on Wilhelmine Strasse, where all sorts of artists and actors used to go — perhaps they still do. As the theatres were not open yet, guests were still eating and chatting at the little tables.

The old teacher went straight to a corner table where two men of his own age, in passably good black coats, were sitting. He introduced Klaus as his fellow-countryman, and ordered supper.

Klaus Baas had a very distinct feeling that all these people were absolutely alien to him, and that his mother would sum them all up, after a very short examination, as riffraff and a set of fools; but after his long dumb months of work he hungered for life and talk. He looked around the smoky room with curiosity. Eating eagerly, they told with vigorous gestures of their travels, compared cities from Budapest to Stockholm, passed judgment on this or that artistic performance, and even gave a short representation of it, with pompous words and gestures. Klaus soon found out what the three who were sitting at their table did. One, a little fat, beardless fellow, got his living by singing or declaiming comic pieces; the second, a lank yellow man with long black hair, was the first violin in a choral society; the third, a dried-up little man with a three-cornered face, like a cat's, had once been a waiter, and was now a juggler. The bookseller was really the head of the little table, even though he could not boast of any such special accomplishments, for he made reflective little comments, with the air of a great sage, on everything that was said.

When supper was over, a huge bowl of punch appeared, amid expressions of joy from the whole room. Punch glasses were handed round. The first violin got up, rapped on his glass for silence, buttoned up his shiny black coat, and stuck three fingers between the buttons on his

chest. Then he looked around suddenly with one great soulful gesture, forced the rising tide of emotion back hastily with a short shake of his black mane, and spoke. He said that Danielo Danako, the world-renowned comic reciter, sitting here near him, was sixty years old to-day! He praised Danielo's art, his play of expression, that had made so many a stomach shake with mirth on both sides of the ocean, and had called out so many tears of innocent merriment. He praised Danielo's inner nature, that showed itself in suppers he had given, and in touching confidences over a bottle of wine to many, of whom he, the speaker, had been one. And if he was proud of anything in this world — and there were many things of which he was proud — it was that this man had honored him with his friendship. And holding his glass out stiffly to the comedian, he wound up, "My heart's brother, brother of my heart!"

The more the praises rained down upon him, the more the comedian had shrunk into himself. Now he sat there, his head sunk on his breast, the tears rolling over his shiny black waistcoat. He wanted to reply; but it seemed that he could not speak extemporaneously, in spite of having such a gift for declamation; and he was half drunk, too. He laid his hand benignly on Klaus Baas's mole-colored head and said, amid his tears, "This young man, who is a good friend of mine, will reply in my place."

A hot shudder ran over Klaus Baas; he drew his head out cautiously from under the old man's hand, reached for his Stanley, and hurried out amid general confusion.

What a thing to have happen to you! What queer people there were in this world! Suppose that his mother got to know that he had been sitting around with these people! Or even that he had been in St. Pauli! But it certainly had been terrifically interesting! and he still wanted to look around a little more that evening. Yes, indeed; and why not? After all that hard work! He was sixteen years old, and he had never seen St. Pauli yet!

So he strolled along, his book under his arm, with the

throng of men. It was quite dark by this time. There were some English sailors — how they straddled along in their wide trousers. What an impudent girl that was! Why, she looked at him as if she knew him and wanted to speak to him. How full that inn was! Everybody laughing and talking! How restrained and shut in it made his life seem! Do you suppose that any one of all those people had lost a sister or a father, or had a severe, silent mother, or knew anything about grief or need? And over there there was a great show: “Negro Dances! Ladies and Gentlemen! Twenty wild women from Dahomey! Positively their first appearance!” Oh, what a life it was!

After a while he felt like going into a tavern. He sat down in one corner, ordered a glass of beer, and drank a little. As he was looking around him, his glance fell on his Stanley. He opened it, and soon forgot everything around him. It was the first time since he had read “Robinson Crusoe,” years before, that he had had time and opportunity to read a connected story. Now he sat there as if bewitched. He read and read. The life and action he had seen around him was still alien to him, but the life and action in the book suited him exactly. The guests came and went. A crowd of young clerks, who took a table beside him, joked and racketed. Klaus, still thinking, looked up; it struck him that he would be better off hid behind them. The people, seeing him sitting there so entirely lost in himself, and seeing how young he was, thought perhaps that he was the host’s son, and let him alone. One of them, however, said to him teasingly, “Sling that book in the corner, man! Here’s where the world is! Here’s where the rafters ring!” Klaus looked up, with an embarrassed, absent smile, and read on undisturbed for a long while. Then a pale young man came in and, as he could not find any other place, sat down at Klaus’s table. He sat in silence a while, and then asked whether Klaus knew Hamburg well.

Then Klaus shut his book and answered. He asked the stranger questions, too. The young man, who was

about two years older than Klaus, had come from upper Silesia to hunt work. Klaus couldn't get much more than that out of him. Klaus asked him about his parents; the man spoke of them as calmly as one speaks of strangers. Klaus asked him about his brothers and sisters; yes, he had brothers and sisters — several — a good many — and his face was as indifferent as if he had been talking about the cobblestones in the street. Klaus asked him what road he had taken to Hamburg, and through what cities he had come; he didn't know. And as to what he had done to find work here — well, it came out that he had not hunted for it like a good hunting dog on a trail, but like a cur fooling along the road. That was the way he had got to St. Pauli and to this table, where now he sat looking down stupidly into his glass of beer.

Klaus swelled up with lofty sympathy. He began to swagger and boast, as if he knew Hamburg through and through. And soon they went out to show the young man something of the city.

Klaus and his new acquaintance strolled through the streets, animated by the evening crowds. It was new and strange to Klaus, too, for he had never before dared to be out of the flat at night. They went along the Steinweg and the Grosser Burstah, out on the Alster.

They stood for a good while in the clear, fresh night air in front of the entrance of a large hotel on the Jungfernstieg, where some festivity was going on, for the doorway was beautifully decorated, and voices and snatches of gay music could be heard now and then when the inner doors were opened. Carriages were waiting; now and then a guest or two came out and either walked or drove away. Through one of the basement windows came the rattle and clatter of the kitchen.

The Silesian went over to the other side of the street and sat down there on a bench, looking stupidly around him; he had lost all his interest in Hamburg already. Klaus Baas told him that he wanted to see if an old family friend of his wasn't in there; they were expecting a rich friend from South America to visit them. He went across

to the hotel again and stood staring, open-mouthed, at the beautiful picture of high life, which he had never had the chance to see before.

While he was still standing there, the inner door opened again, and two girls, accompanied by a beautiful and stately mother, came out and stood there a second waiting for their carriage. And then Klaus saw that it was his two old acquaintances! It was they! How beautiful they were in their short white dresses, with straight, slender legs, and delicate feet in shining black shoes! He moved back slowly into the shadow so that they would not see him. It was they! Grown a little bigger, and very, very much more beautiful! Klaus stood there, oppressed by a gloomy feeling: what a distance there was between them! What am I in comparison with them? How poor I am, and how far away from them! Then the carriage came and took them away. "Oh Lord!" he thought, "now they've gone, and I'll never see them again."

Just then he heard a low, cheerful voice from the basement, "Say, you, call your pal over from the bench, and then come here."

The Silesian, sleepy and indifferent as he was, had smelled out something already; he had got up remarkably fast and was standing there beside Klaus. "When I was a young fellow," the cook said, "I slept at Mother Green's many a time myself. You shall have a dish of hot soup." He reached for the dish which was standing on the white table at his side.

Then Klaus said hastily that he had to go home, and hurried away.

He trotted on through the quiet streets, thinking over and over, "Oh, Lord, if only some good luck would come! I've got to see to it that I get into some counting house — I'm going to work just as hard as I can — Oh, Lord, if only some good luck would come right away!"

He found his mother still working, though it was nearly midnight. He told her that he had been working in an office where the errand boy hadn't come and that his work had lasted into the night. She worked on, her

face as uncommunicative as ever, and did not answer. He went to bed.

The first thing he thought of when he woke up the next morning was the two girls. He studied over how he could become like them, and again it seemed as if some good luck or other had simply got to come. He worked himself into a breathless feeling that he had to wait and hope for some great stroke of good luck. Seeing his Stanley lying there, he began to read again, but couldn't get interested in it. He told his mother that he was to go to the office again toward evening, and that he had hopes of being taken on regularly as errand boy. Then, with rather a bad conscience, he and Stanley marched on deeper and deeper into Africa. Antje Baas, sitting behind a pile of blue cloth, looked at him suspiciously now and then. Once toward evening, when he happened to look up, he caught her look and it disquieted him. He laid the book down and went out as if he were going to work.

When he got outside, it seemed to him too late to go to an office to ask for work. Perhaps in St. Pauli he might come across that great, great good luck! Perhaps the stranger from America had come! Perhaps, even, he wasn't this hard, plain woman's son at all! Perhaps he would find a place to-morrow in a good office. His conscience was pitifully uncomfortable. When a man is in this mood, what does he do? Klaus went on in the same way. Soon he was back on the Spielbudenplatz again. The bright active life there, to which he had got a little more accustomed, made him cheerful again, and he went on with greater assurance.

He had stopped before the first music hall, and was standing there considering whether he should venture to go in for a while; all at once there in front of him stood his mother! He was horribly frightened, less over what was going to happen to him than over the fact that she, his mother, was standing there on the street in front of him, in St. Pauli, at night! He pulled his hands out of his pockets and stepped back, the soul gone out of his face.

She gave him a vigorous box on the ear. "I'll drive the Baas out of you!" she said, harshly. "You shall be a farm-hand!"

Klaus ran toward home, his cheeks flaming with a heat that did not come merely from the blow. He had grown absolutely sober all at once; he had suddenly become a very different person. His punishment was altogether just! He was a lazybones, a loafer, a man like Jonni Dau, a liar! On his way to the house of correction! It was horrible, horrible! To think that she had gone after him, and had trapped him! He had known well enough himself that he was going along in a labyrinth, with no way out! It was horrible, horrible! His ears boxed on the street! That was worse than the tongs! He could still see how astonished a young girl had looked who had come along the street just as his mother had reached out for him. She had even spoken his name! Baas! Baas! Distinctly, too! Oh, Lord! he wouldn't dare to show himself in St. Pauli for seven years! He would have to change his features and wear other clothes! He would have to hide himself till his beard came, so that no one would recognize him.

He went through the Millerntor in great leaps, as if murderers were chasing him. He didn't dare look around for his mother. Would she strike him again? That didn't go any longer; he was sixteen! Horrible! He was to be a farm-hand! Well, he didn't deserve anything better! To-morrow she would take him back home and bind him over as a farm-hand for his whole life! That horrible ride on the train, and then to be a farm-hand! What should he do?

For one second he thought of the stranger from America. But, wonderful to relate, this stranger left him now once for all. That idea didn't fit in any longer. It was as if that one box on his ears had smashed the whole golden dream into little bits! There wasn't anything in it! And that woman, who had boxed his ears, was his mother, without any doubt. Oh, without any doubt at all! The world had suddenly got gruesomely sober.



Work was the thing, just work! Oh, if those two beautiful girls knew that he had been fool enough to believe in a miracle, and rascal enough to loaf around St. Pauli for three days! And if the artist knew! Where could he get work now? Right away? He must begin to hunt at once! But where? He must get a job somewhere, so as not to fall into his mother's hands! Suppose he were to go to the artist's now? It was autumn, and she might be home again.

He took to his heels and ran and ran, till he stood breathless in her room, like a hunted rat that has found a hole.

She was sitting in her old place, still putting in a few touches in the dusk on the mantle of an apostle. Opposite her, on the chair which the beautiful little girl used to sit on, sat an old, badly dressed man, with white hair and large, ghostlike eyes. She seemed to be droning alone in pleasant conversation with him. She did not look up, but said, "Wait a little." Then, after a while, she looked up at him over her spectacles. "Is it you, Klaus?" she said; "what do you want?"

Klaus stammered out briefly what had happened—his father's death, their need of money, his trip back home, his work on the barge,—and now he did not know what to do next.

She settled herself comfortably, painted away, looked at the old man, and painted on. "Wash the brushes," she said.

He washed the brushes, giving her a sidewise look now and then. He began to breathe a little more slowly and to feel a little relieved.

After a while she said, "My father was determined that I should be a teacher; I'd have painted the children's faces, I believe. My mother was more reasonable. She said, 'She shall be what she is able to be, and what she wants to be!' And so, what can you do, and what do you want to do?"

He looked at her miserably and stupidly. "What can I do and what do I want to do?"

"Yes," she said curtly; "think quick, and speak."

He was silent. In his anxiety, the tears came into his eyes.

"Say something or other!" she said threateningly. "Out with it!"

"I can't do it on mother's account," he said, "or else the thing I'd like to do most is to go around the world, to Africa first."

He had thought she would fall off her chair, but she said quite composedly, "That's about what I expected. What do you want to go for — to preach the gospel?"

He shook his head.

"Well," she said, "that's true enough; you aren't much for that. Write a book about your travels?"

He shook his head again.

"Well, then, for heaven's sake, tell what you do want — just to take a trip?"

He saw that he had to come out with it. "See what's going on there, and bring new life into things, and manage them."

She leaned back farther in her chair, studied the old man with a sort of grim attention, and said, "You might just as well have said at first that you want to be a merchant."

"Yes," he said relieved, "that's what I've always wanted. And I've been trying it already, but they won't take me because I was on the barge and because I haven't been to the high school."

She painted on. Then she stopped, dismissed the old man, bustled around the room for a while, then went out. She came back in an enormously broad mantle, with a sort of old felt hat on her gray head. The brushes were lying on the board arranged in the old prescribed manner. "Come!" she said.

They went downstairs and turned toward the harbor. He followed, several steps behind her. When she was asking questions about his parents, brothers and sisters, his schooling, or Peter Sööt, he trotted along a step or two in front of her while he was answering, then dropped behind again. They went across the Rödingsmarkt to the Dovenfleet, climbed up several flights of stairs in an old

house, and stopped before a lighted glass door which said, P. C. Trimborn & Co. After they had caught their breath a little, they went in.

Klaus's dazed eyes saw several rooms brightly lighted by gas, which showed a number of distinguished looking young faces turned toward them, a lot of paper, and large books. The artist's voice, as she said that she wanted to speak to Herr Trimborn, sounded far away. When she vanished he felt as if he had lost every shred of protection or shelter. He stood there looking down at the floor. She came back and beckoned to him, and he followed her into a beautiful room. Looking past her broad back, he saw a tall, elderly man, very well dressed in black, who said to him, in a remarkably self-possessed, sober voice, "Shut the door." When Klaus had shut it, the man asked him short definite questions about his parents, his childhood, his schooling, and especially about the last summer.

The precision of the questions did good to Klaus's dissipated spirit, which really felt the need of discipline; their downrightness straightened him up; the calm, cold eyes made cowardly lies and gay dreams sink away. So he answered quietly and shortly; he was breathless, and big tears stood in his eyes. When the man finally asked whether his mother could support him for three years longer, he said with trembling lips and heaving breast, with an exultant feeling of love and pride, that she would do anything for him, even work all night. He had paid the debt to Timmermann, and his mother had all the work now that she needed.

The merchant was silent for a while. Turning to the artist, he said, "You have known him for a long time; you have seen his school reports, and they were excellent, you say? And you say he writes a good hand?" The artist nodded. "And you think that a firm like mine ought to do a particularly good deed once a year?"

She nodded twice. "I will be responsible for him," she said.

The merchant smiled. "For what amount?" he said

good-naturedly. He gave Klaus another good long look. Then he said, "Well, then, I will make an exception, and will try this young man. You will see to it that his clothes aren't too different from those the other young men wear. And I hope you will get some pleasure out of your recommendation, Fräulein Laura."

And with that they were dismissed.

When they got downstairs again the artist drew a long breath. "That went off well enough!" she murmured. "Heaven save us! To think that such people can never do a good deed without putting on so many airs about it! It goes all through me! Well: now you see to it, young man, that you make something of yourself! That's one good step—from the barge into P. C. Trimborn's office. What did you say that man's name was?"

"Peter Sööt, Aunt Laura."

## CHAPTER X

ANTJE BAAS still kept up the habit of giving even the oldest of her children a good scrubbing with her own hands every Sunday morning, and on special occasions. She did it with such vigor and thoroughness that when they got out of her hands they had the air of being squeezed together, rounded off, and they absolutely glistened. But never before had she seized any of her children so firmly, or kneaded and scrubbed him so fiercely as she did her third child to-day—the one that had seemed a suspicious character to her ever since the day he was born, and particularly so after what had happened yesterday. Then she brushed him off, scolded him vigorously, threatened him with the gallows and the wheel, and sent him off.

Fifteen minutes later Klaus went in through the glass door. Several of the young men were there already, sitting or standing around, ready to get to work. While they were looking at Klaus curiously, a middle-aged little man, wearing a jacket made of lasting, came out of the adjoining room.

Klaus had occasionally seen or heard strangers introduce themselves to each other. So, making an awkward little bow, he said distinctly, "Klaus Hinrich Baas."

A long, thin, red-haired fellow, leaning comfortably against the doorway, said, "Quite a complete firm!" A light-haired, distinguished young man gave him a cold, arrogant look. The others laughed.

Klaus got even redder than his scrubbing had made him. He looked around helplessly for a place, and the little man in the lasting jacket came over and showed him where to sit.

Klaus sat there, just opposite the little man's high desk, in a sort of anxious, solemn bliss. With bent head he worked away at the counting which the little man had given him to do. He spent the day going through a lot of shares of stock that had been bundled together in confusion, arranging them according to their numbers, and making a list of them. He soon got up into the large numbers.

Klaus scarcely ventured to look away, as he sat there bent over his work. What long legs and arms they had! What magnificent trousers! With what quiet assurance they sat there, or got up and went back and forth! Now and then one of them asked a question, or some one came out of the inner room, the door of which always stood open, to give some directions. Klaus didn't understand either the question or the answer. Several times he heard behind him the low, wonderfully calm, clear voice that he already knew; then they all looked at each other, and one of them got up hastily to get what the chief wanted.

Early on the second morning, before the chief had come, things were more animated. They began to initiate him, as they called it. A long thin fellow, with reddish hair and projecting ears, who sat opposite him, said that now they were going to find out what he could make the worst mess of. First one of them shoved a letter at him and showed him how to copy and register it; then another brought a mass of orders for him to enter in a book; then some one else wanted him to hunt up a sample in the sample-book. A few days later they put him in charge of the stamps. Dumb with horror, he took over the change and the stamps, — stamps of two, three, and five marks, that he hadn't even known existed! And at the end of the week the little man, whom he had gradually come to know was the procurist, or head clerk, told him that after this it was his work to ask every stranger that came into the office what he wanted.

It all made his head swim. His peasant clumsiness and ignorance of this new world made him so distrustful of himself and of everybody else that he fell into all sorts of

queer mistakes. He put the wrong enclosures into letters; he gave a bank messenger, or firm messenger, things that were not meant for him, or that were not ready; he mixed up names and firms. All this caused great confusion, and made it necessary to do some lively running and hunting. One caller, who wouldn't give Klaus the least idea of what he wanted, but whose cleverness and assurance made him seem imposing, Klaus let pass to the chief's room; and then he had the pleasure of finding out that the fellow was a miserable beggar. And when a young girl, who was going to walk straight past the railing into the chief's office, came in one day, he ordered her to go back, and, sure that he was doing his duty, he was vigorously demanding that she tell him who she was, when he heard the chief call out from his desk, "Is that you, my child?" And she went by Klaus Baas with a smile. And then of course the procurist had to throw in some reproaches. After such mistakes, he felt altogether unfitted for this calling; he even thought that he must be a most curious sort of person, and he sat there depressed, scarcely even hearing the consoling words of the tall, red-haired clerk opposite him: "Didn't I tell you so? You're just like an ox in front of a new stable door! The best thing you can do, Baas, is to pretend you're dead."

To his surprise, however, he gradually saw that they were not going to turn him off on account of his mistakes; they even seemed to expect them from the youngest apprentice; and so his head began to come out from between his shoulders, as a hedgehog's does when everything is still. He looked around cautiously, taking in this peculiar little community into which he had stumbled.

There were three rooms in the office. In the back room, the big double doors of which were always open, four or five men sat around a long table covered with different kinds of goods. A procurist was in charge of this room. These men sometimes sat silent and serious, working at full speed for days at a time, when agents of the factories came to try to sell their products, or when a steamer that was to take a shipment of their goods to the

far islands was scheduled to sail. After that they would work on more comfortably for a while, writing and entering their accounts; now and then they got pretty lively, and sometimes, if the chief didn't happen to be there, they even stirred up a sort of mild revolution.

In the middle room, in which Klaus sat, still holding his head rather low, four men worked on accounts. The procurist of this room, whose place was directly opposite Klaus, worked away tirelessly and punctiliously, brooding over numbers, accounts, notes, and insurance rates like a hen brooding over her chicks. Klaus was his handy-man. He did each thing that was laid out for him as well as he could, and then went on to the next thing, often without understanding it at all. On Klaus's left worked a tall, slim, light-haired man, with a well-shaped head, Karl Eschen. He was a year or two older than Klaus. He was always busy, rather silent, and always serious. Sometimes he would stand up in that distinguished way of his for hours, entering figures in the huge ledger in front of him, as carefully as if he were engraving on steel. If one of the others came up to him about something that was wanted, he always made his answer as plain and as carefully rounded off as if he were talking to a foreigner; then he bent his well-shaped head over his neat accounts again. Klaus Baas looked up to him in silent awe, regarding him as the incarnation of business ability, which he could never hope to reach — and of all possible distinction, as well.

The tall, red-haired fellow opposite him was nothing compared to Karl Eschen. He had a very pronounced tendency to ramble off and get at things that had nothing to do with his work. At one minute he would be showing some pretty girl's picture, which he carried in the breast pocket of his long black coat; he said that she was the sweetest girl his eyes had ever lighted on, and that he was going to dance with her next Sunday on the Süllberg. Or else out of the same pocket — which was made unusually large on purpose — he would pull a little book of poems, Goethe, Heine, or Hebbel — he was going to give it to



some other girl, he said, in order to initiate her into love and poetry. Then he would pull out a long fancy box, which held a collection of neckties of the most remarkable colors and shapes. He got them from Clarkson & Company, in London, he said, and was offering them at cost just for the sake of improving the looks of the office. But what he liked to do best of all was to talk about his little home town in West Holstein, about the pretty girls there, who were all his friends, about his "old gentleman," the town doctor, whose only child he was, and about the wonderfully beautiful cemetery there, and the grave in which the mother of one of our great poets was buried. He was particularly fond of cemeteries, and liked to talk feelingly about Ohlsdorf, where, he said, the dead were taking their rest under the trees as if they had just finished a long, hot journey. Klaus Baas couldn't get over listening to all this talk with ever fresh admiration. Karl Eschen didn't listen to it. The procurist shook his head. The fourth man at their table said, in his curt, straightforward way, "You're crazy."

This fourth man, who was two years older than Klaus, and was in the last year of his apprenticeship, had a figure as short and concise as his way of talking. He lived outside of Hamburg, on his uncle's farm. The only things he ever talked about, when he did open his mouth, were his boyhood in the open fields, dangerous exploits at swimming, burning off the dikes and setting fire to the heather, falling off horses, and such things. He said that life in Hamburg was no life at all, and that this office had no right whatever to exist; it was dishonorable to cheat the poor, childlike Indians with all sorts of rubbish, and to take the beautiful natural products of their country away from them. In short, all Hamburg was just about good enough to set on fire. Nobody had a right to live but the farmer. And then he laughed, half grimly, half good-humoredly.

In the anteroom, the chief sat at his desk alone. There was another desk in the handsome room, which was not in use now; the man that used to sit at it had gone

to the islands on a tour of inspection. Usually the chief sat there in silence, absorbed in hard work. There were other days, however, when he issued commands from morning till evening; first he wanted this or that brought to him; then he wanted former contracts to compare with the new ones; now old or late reports from the manager in the islands; now things that had been offered to the firm by the manufacturing companies. Then every one in the office became alert; first one man, then another, jumped up to take in what the chief wanted.

The youngest apprentice had tiresome, solitary work to do, and the day's work lasted for many hours; yet it never seemed monotonous to the boy who had stared out over the edge of the barge at the water for half a day at a time. Almost every day some sort of excitement broke up the quiet, industrious work of the twelve men. And if one day was uneventful, the next one made up for it. Perhaps the quartermaster, a big, fine-looking man, would come up from the harbor to report to the book-keeper of the back room about the storing of goods. Or else his assistants, active young fellows, would bring up samples of foreign goods that had just come in, in paper bags, or in sacks thrown over their shoulders. They sat down on the table and pulled their knives out of the sheath, and made a great point of lowering their voices, so as to show that they were used to talking in the midst of the racket of derricks, cranes, and whistles. Their bright sharp eyes looked around contemptuously at all this writing and at these writing-folks. Sometimes an agent would bring in samples from his factory—good products, sometimes, but often gay rubbish made on purpose to send to the natives. The agent used all the persuasiveness he had, as he offered his glass balls, huge arrows of a glaring yellow to stick in the hair, cheap shiny watches, little musical instruments, and what they called neger wörden, or long staves tipped with copper—a sort of staff of state. It did not surprise any one by this time if the youngest apprentice looked up, or if he made up some errand for himself and came over to satisfy

his curiosity by looking at the gay stuff. Perhaps an old employee, burned by the hot sun of Brazil or Eastern Asia, would come in to visit the office again and to see if any of his old associates happened to be there still. He would come in, bold and free, and ask all sorts of questions, surprised that there were so many of them there now. In his day, he would say, they had worked a good deal harder. Then the men in the merchandise room, who always spoke up the first and the loudest, joked back at him, saying: "In your day, the shop didn't go very well, did it? Well, we've got it running right at last." Or perhaps some agent would come in to make a purchase, amounting to many thousands, of goods brought from across the seas.

Sometimes, before the departure of a steamer by which they were shipping a great deal of merchandise, and for which they had to get the mail ready too, they worked silently for days, with every nerve strained to the utmost. Then a day would come when, from early morning on, a sort of wanton joyousness prevailed all through the office. And when the chief went out to lunch, or to the Exchange, it came to the surface at once. The merchandise people were the worst. They took off their coats and dressed themselves up in arm-rings, leg-rings, crowns, hair-arrows, and those staves of state, and then had a lively scuffle across their table; sometimes their bodies were all bunched together in a mass, with their thin legs flapping below it, so that they looked like a big spider that couldn't find any place to set down its eight or ten legs. Then, venturing out to the door of the middle room, they talked to the tall, thin fellow, saying that he was always giving away poems and flowers and kissing girls' hands, without ever getting anything back; then they would maintain that the middle room never did anything but useless writing. If they couldn't get them stirred up in this way, they would roll a jam pot across the floor, and hold the end of a staff under their very noses, and so finally get even the more sober middle room into an uproar. The tall, red-haired fellow, whom they called Heini Peters, jumped up and stood in

the doorway, his long coat tails flapping; and the growling little heather burner, losing his calmness and forgetting his contempt of everything, rolled the jam pot back among their opponents. The racket lasted so long that at last Karl Eschen would say, in his quiet, decisive way, "That is enough now; I have a difficult piece of work on hand, and I don't want to make any mistakes in it on your account." Then they gradually grew rational. Klaus Baas had looked on at the tumult in silent astonishment, still far too uncertain to take any part in it, and much too stiff and conscientious to waste any of the working hours in play. "What calves they are!" he thought, secretly upholding Karl Eschen, who put an end to it all.

At noon, when the others went out for lunch, he kept watch in the office all alone for half an hour, sometimes for an hour. He strolled around, standing at the window and looking down into the street. And gradually, as always happens with people who have been intimidated, his shy spirit grew bolder again, stirred, and rose, and began to toy with its imaginings. And those nimble imaginings, which had been only loosely held in check, began to beg for a little dance; and the poor, uncertain, terrified youngster let himself go to meet them, and without shame and without self-scorn, let himself swing around with them in a reckless little dance. His father and sister, invisible, hovering ghosts, looked in through the window at him. Their faces were shining; they were far removed from sorrow and care. How glad they were to see him standing there, well dressed, in those bright rooms; one year more—then he would be standing in Eschen's place, entering great sums in the big book, each in its proper place. No stranger was coming to lay down gold and good fortune suddenly on the brown table by the hearth! The stranger was not needed any longer. It was much better to go out oneself into foreign lands, to the islands, or to Eastern Asia, and there, by means of hard toil and cleverness—oh, extraordinary cleverness!—and by some great lucky chance, to acquire very considerable possessions. And then to come back! Tanned almost black!

A man, a fine looking, bearded man. And his mother and the children would be standing on the Landungs-Brücke, Suse Garbens with them! He went into the chief's handsome office and walked up and down the rug, the way the chief did, slowly and deliberately; he stood by the writing-table, as the chief often did, and went over, rather confusedly, the cares a chief has to think about. And so he played till the others came back; and then the dance and the play was over. The shy, depressed youngster bent his mole-colored head again over his figures, which were still absolutely meaningless to him.

And in this way a year passed, Klaus working on with anxious conscientiousness and faithful industry. Then one clear, breezy autumn day, a great uproar rose in the middle room. The short, taciturn heather burner, who had been unusually quarrelsome for several days, had just celebrated his nineteenth birthday. This, and the beautiful autumn weather, made him angry and talkative. He claimed that it was immoral to spend such beautiful weather sitting still in a room, and over such work as theirs, what was more. All Hamburg, and P. C. Trimborn's with it, was nothing but vileness and madness! Set it on fire! What was the Exchange, what was a merchant, what were figures? Nothing but stupid, senseless stuff! Now a peasant, a horse, an ox, — these were real things.

They tried to quiet him. The men in the back room said he had better come and help them for a few days; they didn't know what to do first; they had an unusually large shipment to get off, and several hundred accounts to get ready. He'd never learn what work meant, out there in the middle room.

Heini Peters said that he had found the grave of a countrywoman of his yesterday, in the Ohlsdorf cemetery; it was in such a snug, poetic place, too, in among ash trees and alders; it was wonderful! He ought to sit there beside it for an hour; then he would forget all the vexations of his life, and all that he longed for, too.

The heather burner didn't even look at him; he only said curtly, "Crazy!"

Karl Eschen, looking up from his work, said, in his quiet, earnest way, "You ought to keep up some kind of sport, Hanssen, to offset your work. You had better join our rowing club; I'd be glad to take you with me to-night."

But the heather burner only snarled.

The bookkeeper, who was in rather a bad humor, said, "Work is the best thing to keep foolish thoughts away."

"Yes," said Hanssen, "but what kind of work? Tell me to dig out a spring or build a house, or find an ox that has run away! Do you call this work?" Getting up, he went to the window and stood looking out into the clear, beautiful sunny day. Turning around suddenly, he said, "Children, I'm going! I've got a cousin on a farm in the Argentine Republic; in two weeks I'll be on my way there!" At that instant the chief came in. And he asked for an interview on the spot. When he came out again, he said that he was to leave in fourteen days, and that the chief was a noble man.

The procurist, who was usually friendly and good-humored enough, grew even more irritable than he had already been, at the prospect of losing a good assistant so soon. On the firm's plantations over in the islands, they had had a serious plague of rats. In the search for something that would exterminate them, they had sent over some poison months before, and had asked to have a dead rat sent to them so that they could see how the poison had acted. The dead rat had come, but it had rotted to pieces. The procurist was growling about this now. Finally he said that in copying the letter, Klaus Baas had left out the words "as usual," so that the directions for soldering the rat up airtight, as was usual in shipping anything perishable, had not been followed.

Klaus turned pale, thinking: "There it is! They've no use for me! Of course not! No use for me!"

The heather burner, happy at the step he had taken, said consolingly: "Oh, leave that old dead rat alone, Herr Wallis! Just look out of the window! What beautiful weather!" Tall Heini Peters drew a box of blue silk

handkerchiefs out of his drawer and displayed them. Karl Eschen, not troubling himself about other people's moods, worked on in his careful, yet swift, fashion ; but he seemed to be somewhat friendlier than usual to the bungler.

Emboldened by Karl Eschen's friendliness, Klaus Baas raised his head, and said, with wild eyes, "You are just making up that accusation, and you know it! I can't bother the chief about it, and so I just have to take the blame for it!"

The procurist said nothing more, and worked on. The others tried to quiet Klaus — "There, there — not so hot. He didn't mean it that way." Karl Eschen shrugged his shoulders disapprovingly. Klaus Baas sat at his work with thick tears in his eyes, thinking, "Well, it's all over now. You're incapable, ridiculous — and now they treat you dishonorably, too."

As Klaus was going down the stairs, when the day's work was over, he suddenly heard Karl Eschen behind him, speaking to him. Klaus stopped, pleased and surprised, and listened, hanging his head. "I just wanted to tell you," Karl Eschen said, "not to take what the procurist said too much to heart. It is not so easy to sit still writing down figures day after day, year in and year out. Now look, Hans is right in a way: our lives were meant naturally to roll along out in the sunshine and the rain, we were meant to wander about and hunt and fish and fight; and instead of that, our lives are about like the pillars in the railing on these stairs. Now and then our shackled spirits revolt, and that gives us a fit of rage against our work. But the procurist knows very well that you are industrious and conscientious, and that you have a good idea of the business, and will make a good, reliable merchant some day. And you know it, too."

Klaus Baas grew red with happiness. "I am very glad to have you tell me that," he said, in a trembling voice. "You are so capable!"

"Well," said the young man, indifferently, and yet a little flattered, "in six months I am to go to England. If you work on conscientiously, I'll propose you for my place.

Heini Peters certainly can't have it. Then there's one other thing I wanted to say to you. You heard me tell Hans awhile ago that he ought to take up some sport, and you know I invited him to go out rowing with me. You ought to think of doing something like that, too; it would keep you in good spirits. You had better not join a club, for that would be too expensive for you; but you ought to hire a boat now and then and take a good long row."

Klaus looked down and said hesitatingly, "But when I get home, I have to help with the housework, and help my brothers and sisters with their lessons. And I have to get along with my English, too. I have a good start with my stenography."

"Well," Karl Eschen said calmly, "just as you think best! But be sure you learn your English!" He touched his hat and went on.

As Klaus, happy through and through, was going on, he heard some one call him again. Looking back, he saw Heini Peters limping along behind him, with his long crooked legs. His long black coat was blowing out in the wind, and his gay necktie was waving. "Well," he said, "so Karl Eschen was talking to you! You can be proud of that! He belongs to an old Hamburg merchant family; that's where he gets his gift for figures and ledgers and carrying on a business. Do you know, if I had had a chance to choose a profession for myself, I'd have chosen to be the sexton in the city I was born in! I'm not joking! The present sexton, a friend of mine, lives in an awfully pretty old house, with beautiful lindens around it; just now their blossoms are covering the whole place. Just imagine what this sunset would be in such a place as that! To sit there with a volume of Goethe or Heine in your hand, and the graves of your forefathers in front of you! Charming, I tell you! But I am the only son of a prominent physician, and so I couldn't be a sexton!" He talked on about several pretty girls at home who had invited him to take a walk with them at night along the dike, and said that he expected to do it on Saturday or



Sunday. He was talking away at full speed when a girl passed them; then he turned back; he had to see, he said, where that beautiful little creature lived.

Klaus Baas felt very happy. His delighted ears kept hearing the deliberate, pleasant voice of that distinguished young man, telling him that he had ability, and was industrious, and would make a very proper sort of merchant some day. Heini Peters couldn't be compared to him at all, and yet it was pleasant that he too, a doctor's son, had talked to him like a comrade.

Klaus's heart felt lighter. He came to have more assurance, and held his head up a little. He didn't stalk along stiffly any longer, keeping close to the walls of the houses; he left the houses, and balanced himself now and then on the curbstone, and stretched his neck out more boldly. He pressed his trousers himself, when they needed it, and bought a beautiful blue necktie from Heini Peters. Now and then, as he passed a young girl, he let his eyes meet hers. On the barge, and during the first year in the office, he had had a feeling of restraint; but now, as self-consciousness developed in him, a new feeling of life rose in him, a desire to win position for himself, to adorn himself, to know that some one of the young things passing him in fluttering clothes liked him. He began to grow taller, too; his shoulders became broader, and his features stronger. His nose turned into a genuine bold Baas nose; the pinching that Antje Baas had begun on the day he was baptized and had kept up so vigorously ever since had not done any good. He had his father's good-humored, sunny eyes, too, but they had a more earnest, sober look. The strong, almost defiant firmness of his mouth, and a certain stiffness in his bearing, he got from his mother.

The new life that came creeping softly over him brought a shy pleasure with it, a not unpleasant restlessness. In a few months, however, in a few weeks, even, it grew strong, as it developed in his good, sound, peasant blood; by and by it was powerful, then harsh, finally tempestuous. He stood inquisitively in front of shop windows

where pictures of women were shown, and speculated over the bearing and carriage of mature women. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, when he was in bed asleep, a vision came to his bedside, enticing him, till he stretched out his hands to it in sleep and drew it down to him. Then, the next morning, coming suddenly to himself, he sat up in bed, sad and ashamed. Once or twice the desire drove him so hard that he slipped out on wet, windy evenings to Klefeker Strasse, and let himself dream that he had several marks in his pocket and could go and take a good look at the life they led down there, if he wanted to. But there he stood, in the sloppy weather, with his collar turned up, for a long time, without going down the street. The vision didn't fit in with his mother and the children; it didn't fit in with P. C. Trimborn and Karl Eschen; it was really the same sort of thing as the two days he had spent before in St. Pauli, that had ended in such contrition on his part. Finally he thought of Suse Garbens. How dear she had been to him that time before! Surely she still remembered him! And he had thought of her often and often—in fact, whenever any other pretty face had struck his fancy. And he had certainly become somebody in the meantime! He wanted to write to her! The dear, sweet, pretty thing! And to think that she was a pastor's daughter! He turned his collar up still higher and walked up and down in the wind and rain, all excited over this new idea. He wanted to write to her! He certainly could venture to write now! He had made something of himself! He would write to her, and forget all the other girls in the world.

At noon the next day, when he was left alone in the office, he sat down in Karl Eschen's place and wrote her a beautiful long letter on a large sheet of the firm's paper. His letter came from the very heart of the golden dreams with which he let himself play in the noonday solitude. He told her that his mother had to have two girls now to help with her tailoring business, and that his sister Hanna was probably going to be a teacher. He told her that he was an apprentice, already in his second year, with a promi-

nent firm; he told her what sort of families the other clerks belonged to, and said that the very best one of them all had told him that some day he would make a good merchant. And later on, he said, he was to go to the far East for his firm.

After some time she sent him a friendly answer. She said that she had a terrier now that went with her on her walks. It couldn't get over the walls, and she laughed till she nearly died, to see it stumbling along behind through the rows of potato plants. Then she asked him if he was interested in girls now, and told him that her father still read the papers as long as ever, and got stupid over it, and that she couldn't get a single rational word out of her mother. She added that the letters came only once a day, and that it was her work to take the bag from the letter-carrier, so that he could write whatever he liked.

Then they began to write regularly once a week. Her letters were cordial, telling of all sorts of trivialities of everyday life. His were rather large and assured in tone, and full of the future. Whenever his immature manhood made him take an instructive or reproofing tone, she did not answer for two weeks.

Well, then, he had a sweetheart now. He did not crane his neck any longer when he went along the Jungfernstieg and the Burstah, and the need that had pressed hard upon him for some time had been appeased. When it rose again sometimes, he choked it back with chivalrous dignity. Feeling that it was time now for him to lay aside all signs of youth and immaturity, he lengthened his stride, giving it a sort of conscious manliness, and his face took on a meditative, anxious look. At home he talked to Hanna as if he were her uncle, urging her to look after the children's lessons every day. He even dared to boast a little to his mother, and bore her scornful jests and hints at St. Pauli with composure, saying, "You'll see some day!" He sat opposite her, working at English and double entry bookkeeping and the laws of trade till his head swam. Then he dropped his book and slipped off

into a blessed beautiful land, in the midst of which rose the aircastle that belonged to him and his sweetheart.

Klaus was gradually working his way into the very heart of the firm's activity. As he began, with his Low German loyalty, really to live in the life of the firm, his spirit ebbed and flowed with what each day brought to the company. He grew excited one day because the quotation for lard was left out of the newspaper report of prices at Antwerp just when that was of great importance to the firm on account of the price of copra; and he was disturbed because the firm's agent in Calcutta had bought too many sacks, which were lying rotting now. He swelled up with pride when the bookkeeper made fun of their competitors one day, and called them all stupid fellows; Klaus agreed with him thoroughly. And when one paper could not be found, at the time for taking the inventory, Klaus hunted that paper even in his dreams. Once when the chief was sick, Klaus was terribly disturbed; he drew the gloomiest pictures of what might happen if the chief should be away long, or should die.

In the course of the year he was transferred to the merchandise room, where he learned to distinguish between good, medium, and poor grades of all sorts of manufactured articles, and to acquire a feeling for the value of everything, from gay rubber balls to wanton bronze statuettes. He managed to understand the general tastes of each nation. Once, when the quartermaster was sick, Klaus stood in his place in barge No. 71 in the Grasbrook harbor, — the same barge he had passed so often years before, — in a very correct attitude in a hard frosty wind for five days, overseeing the loading of goods. And when the year was over, he was really able to write to Suse Garbens in a long letter that he had Karl Eschen's place. He stood there in security, too, doing everything carefully, as Karl had done, entering the debits and credits in the great ledger, bound in gray, on the outside of which still stood the old merchant motto, "Mit Gott."

Klaus was prouder than he should have been. He thought that he was something already. It is true that he

was running along capably enough, as they showed him how to run, within the barriers which the discipline and custom of ages and the nature of men had set up on both sides of his way. But what is the great thing? Ought not a man to find his own road? Ought he not to build it for himself, if it is not made already, and set up his barriers and limits for himself? Most men never get so far as that. And Klaus Baas was still far, far away from it.

He realized that himself sometimes, however; and that was a good sign. The feeling rested on his soul as heavy shadows lie on a deep pond. In the evening, tired from a lively day's work, he stood in the kitchen waiting for his supper; the old whale lamp above the hearth hissed up like a little red torch, sank down again, and spat and sputtered, and from the workroom came the sound of his mother's ceaseless toil. Then, depressed, he fell to thinking and dreaming. Looking back, he thought of the sorrow and care he had lived through, his hard youth, and the ridicule to which he had been exposed; he recognized the boundaries and limitations of his abilities and ambitions, and saw the suspicious elements of his character. And for the future he foresaw new limitations and needs and mistakes, yes, even giant sins; brooding gloomily with wrinkled brow, he realized that the life of man is solitary, melancholy, and mistaken from youth on. Then his thoughts, working on unconsciously, took him a step farther: It all depends on yourself. You ought to be so and so; and you can be. His soul saw its own pure ideal, which the everlasting powers have placed in every noble soul. Wonderful and beautiful, full of grace and truth, it looked at him, saying, This is what you ought to be! Then his good young nature grew sad and bitter, and could see no joy in life.

And so all the winds and torrents of spring worked on him with their manifold influence.

## CHAPTER XI

EVERYTHING looked as if they were going to have an unusually quiet, cheerful day. The table in the merchandise room was covered with ornaments, bright hair decorations, huge red and blue hats, and all sorts of gimeracks. The procurist was bargaining good-humoredly with the agents. Heini Peters had laid aside all thoughts of beautiful churchyards and melancholy poems, and was making an ingenious blue butterfly flutter through the room. The chief — who appeared at nine — was unusually cheerful. He walked around the different rooms with his hands in his pockets, and stood for a while in front of the table looking at its many-colored burden. Then he and the younger partner, who had just come back from India, got into an argument with the procurist of the middle room about whether the islands would produce more copra, cocoa, or rubber in the future. And then in came the quartermaster from the harbor, like a breath of fresh air, to report that the bark loaded with copra for the firm, whose arrival at Cuxhaven had already been reported, had just anchored in the harbor.

But while he and the chief were still talking about unloading her, and about delivering the cargo, and while the clerks in the middle room were scratching away busily, writing notices for the various buyers of the cargo, suddenly one of the quartermaster's boys came running in, shouting, "The bark's on fire!" And he handed over a short note from the captain.

Everybody got very much excited. The insurance policies were hunted up and looked over; the buyers of the cargo were notified; the firm's agents were summoned; everybody was busy writing or running around.

The chief went down to the harbor himself with the quartermaster, and took Klaus Baas along to send back word by.

As they crossed toward the Kranhöft in the ferry-boat, they could already see smoke pouring up in heavy clouds above the barges. By the time they drew nearer along the quay, thick smoke was coming out of the aft hatchway. The west wind drove it out over the whole big ship, and blew it up to the very topmasts. Two fire-boats were pouring in water from the harbor side; they could hear the streams bursting and gushing from the nozzles. Workmen and sailors from the ships near by stood in crowds on the dock. The chief, standing between the captain and the owner of the ship, looked on silently at the destruction.

Klaus Baas, standing just behind him, happened to look around at the crowd of harbor-people of all sorts that had collected on the dock. Just at that moment a troop of sailors, with their bags over their shoulders, chanced to come along the quay from their ship, and they stopped, like the others, to look at the burning ship. Their clothes, from their shapeless white linen caps to their worn down canvas shoes, were absolutely falling to pieces; their hair hung down below their ears and, young as they were, there were light beards on their dark brown cheeks. From the way they went along in a group, not paying any attention to other people, and every one of them, as if by arrangement, leaving the talking to some one else, it was easy to see that they were men that had lived together for many a long month. While Klaus was still looking toward them, he heard a quiet voice give the word of command: "Well, children, up with your bags again! Now for Mother Kindt's!" And they stooped for the sacks, which they had laid down.

The independence in the man's voice and the way he walked and held his shoulders made Klaus recognize Kalli Dau. The stunted little boy had shot up into a bronzed, sinewy young man; he walked a little too heavily for his age, that was all. Klaus turned away quickly, so as not

to be recognized by his old friend under the chief's very eyes, put on an absorbed air, and gazed into the smoke.

He had so much to do for the rest of the day that he hardly thought of Kalli Dau again. Toward evening, however, just as he had attended to the last thing he had to do—entering a bill of exchange that was to pay the customs duties on some tobacco to be sent from San Francisco to the islands—he heard the door behind him open and some heavy object slide down and fall. Turning around, he saw Kalli Dau standing at the railing. Kalli had got shaved, but otherwise he looked just the same as on the wharf; he still had the flat baker's cap, the blue handkerchief twisted around his neck, the huge tarry hands, the sack at his feet.

In the penetrating voice of a man used to addressing a crowd, he asked whether a certain Klaus Baas was here; he had to get some information from him.

“Here I am,” Klaus said, in confusion. “What can I do?”

The chief came to his door and looked over with calm curiosity.

“I got back home,” Kalli said excitedly, “and it's all empty! They say mother's in jail, and my brother Jonni gone to the bad, and Hein's dead; and where the youngster is, they don't know. I've been away three years—damn it all—and then to get such a welcome as this! I've got to find out whether there's any truth in the story. Do you know anything about it?”

Klaus Baas threw a hasty, embarrassed glance around the room, where they were all craning their necks to hear. The procurist was keeping his place in his accounts with his finger, holding the number he had got to in his head. Heini Peters was altogether lost in contemplating Kalli Dau's apparance; he seemed to be trying to think what a poet would make out of this scene; only Karl Eschen did not let it disturb his work. The chief ended the scene by saying, “Go with your friend, Baas, and see if you can help him.”

“That's jolly,” Kalli said. “Just catch hold of this.



That sack's heavy. I've got all sorts of things in it for the folks. Just look; I've brought them two beautiful stuffed parrots, too — the long-tailed kind." Klaus Baas had snatched up his hat. He helped Kalli get the sack up on his shoulder again, and wanted to take the basket with the parrots in himself, but Kalli wouldn't hear to that. "They have such devilish long tails," he said, "you'd break them!" So, with the huge, plump sack on his shoulders, he took the long-tailed parrots too, and they set out.

When they had got out in the street, Klaus Baas asked him if he didn't want to leave the sack somewhere. Kalli Dau, however, said that he didn't trust any man alive; with sparkling, deepset eyes he looked down from under the sack at Klaus Baas. Then he stood still, scolding at his parents because no one could tell him where his brothers and sisters were; it looked to him as if neither God nor man had bothered himself about the little fellows, or cared whether they jumped into the Elbe or what; and where should he go now to look for them?

Klaus Baas finally remembered having heard that Jonni Dau had misbehaved himself at the head pastor's house, where he had been obliged, as a pauper, to go; Klaus proposed that they go there. So off they started through the crowded streets, Kalli ahead with the sack, Klaus Baas bringing up the rear. Now and then some man that the sack struck against scolded, but Kalli Dau went on quite unconcerned. After a walk through byways and cross streets, they found the house, on a quiet street near the church. Kalli Dau went in first. He put the sack down near the door, cleared his throat vigorously, and waited.

Luckily for them, the pastor himself appeared in the white doorway, looking at them inquiringly. He was an elderly, refined looking, smooth-faced man. Kalli Dau said, in his loud, cheerful voice, that he had heard a report that a man named Jonni Dau had misbehaved himself here, and could they tell him where he might be found now?

The pastor did not seem to be altogether delighted at this evening call. He let them come into the room, how-

ever, and gave them the two chairs standing on the right and left of the door. They looked around the beautiful room with curiosity, staring at the high broad bookcases full of books and the broad heavy table, as full of papers as a merchant's table would be. They studied the pastor, sitting there in a handsome black coat, hunting out some yellow reports and looking them over; they studied a thin little man, not in clerical attire, whose shoes showed that he had been doing a good deal of walking. He was sitting at the writing-table looking over things, and shrugging his shoulders now and then. The pastor, talking on as he looked through the reports, said to him, "You know, Herr Candidate, how much is asked of me. To-morrow, for example, I have to go to an affair one of our very first merchants is giving; and you know that our wholesale merchants live very well indeed. That will last till midnight or so — and on Wednesday I am to go to the meeting of the Association of Poor Children's Friends, — Senator Hagen's wife is chairman, you know — to read a lecture on Goethe's lyrics. And on Saturday there's a meeting of the Hamburg Historical Society. So you can understand that there isn't much time left for my studies in old Spanish."

Kalli Dau leaned away over toward Klaus, and said, rather loud; "Say, you, what's all this? We've come to the wrong place! This fellow's a play-actor or something like that."

Klaus Baas shook his head vigorously, giving him an emphatic look of warning.

The candidate had heard Kalli; he got up, and came nearer, saying, with a low laugh, "You've come to the right place."

"Well, then," said Kalli Dau, out loud again, "are all those papers in the bundle about my brother?"

The pastor nodded. "He has given us a great deal of trouble," he said.

"Is that so?" said Kalli Dau; "and are all the foolish things he's done written down there one after another?" The pastor looked at Kalli Dau, somewhat annoyed, but

Kalli was far too much lost in his thoughts to heed him. "In Sydney," he said to the young man in the muddy shoes, "we had a boy on board that stole our tobacco; and he was dirty, too; and we hammered him till he almost fell to pieces. And after that he turned into a really respectable chap. That's what you ought to have done with my brother. What good does it do to write things down?"

The pastor was still turning over yellow reports. At last he said, "Your brother has been in the habit of going a great deal to the notorious Siemsche beer-cellar, on the Kattrepel, and he was in the Harbor Hospital for several weeks. I can't tell you anything else about him."

"Well—we'll go there, then," said Kalli Dau. "Do you want to go part of the way with us?" he asked the candidate. The candidate said good night to the pastor and went with them.

They got on a street car, and stayed on the rear platform, where there were only three people, so that there was room enough for the sack and the parrots. That car made so much noise that Klaus Baas could not hear much of what Kalli and the candidate were saying; once he heard Kalli Dau shouting out, as if he were shouting through a storm, "What do you do at the pastor's, anyway?" And the other answered, "I am a sort of associate; I'm going to be a pastor, too." "Well!" said Kalli, "then you keep clear of all that nonsense the other one was talking about. Always keep down among the people!" And from his great sweeping gestures, he seemed to be explaining it even more closely. The other man listened, laughed out loud, shrugged his shoulders. At the Rödingsmarkt he got off and walked away, shrugging his left shoulder vigorously. "He's a good sort!" Kalli said. "I asked him what he wanted to be a pastor for? He isn't strong enough to be a sailor, but he'd make a good enough chap; he's straight and pleasant, and he knows how to talk."

It was dark by the time they got to the Messberg. They got out and went up Niedern Strasse. The rather narrow street was full of busy people; women standing around, or

going back and forth to the grocer's; workmen, walking heavily, coming up from the harbor; little groups of disreputable figures standing in front of the dimly lighted taverns and beer-cellars; children dancing to the music of a hand-organ clear across the street. Scotch barrows pushed their way through the crowd; a wagon made its way slowly. A dull reddish light played over the whole gay scene. Kalli Dau had great difficulty in getting through the crowd safely; first the sack hit some one, then the parrots were in danger. But when he shoved the people gently aside, they looked at him, and then not seeming to mind it, made room for him, sometimes even saying, "Make a little room for the young fellow!"

They found the entrance to the beer-cellar, and went down the dilapidated steps into a miserable, musty room which had a sort of bar, several benches, and two or three wobbly tables on a dirty plaster floor. In a corner at the rear several men and one old woman were playing cards in silence; the only sound they made was when their fists struck dully against the table. A little farther forward an old man was sitting, explaining something carefully to a lad, who was listening eagerly, leaning forward, keen-eyed. A tall, loosely built fellow with a stupid, vicious face was sitting near the bar.

Kalli Dau, seeing that his brother was not there, asked loudly, "Does any one here know where Jonni Dau is?"

The tall fellow jumped up and came forward insolently. "What are you after there?" he asked, in a drunken, quarrelsome tone. Kalli repeated his question; his voice seemed like a breath of fresh air, in that wretched underground room.

The tall man went almost up to him; but Kalli Dau pulled his sailor's knife out of his belt and waved it through the air, as he repeated his question: "Does any one here know where Jonni Dau is? Do you know, landlord?"

"Look around for yourself!" the drunken landlord said contemptuously. "Is he sitting on a bench, or is he under one? Do you see him hanging down from the ceiling?"

Take another look, why don't you? What do I care for your Jonni Dau?"

Turning around, they climbed up the stairs again and started off toward the Harbor Hospital, Kalli Dau silently leading the way with his load.

The doorkeeper said that Jonni Dau was there, certainly, but that it wasn't the visiting hour. Kalli Dau, setting down his sack and parrots, told the man to take care of them, and said that he was Jonni's brother. Then they were taken through a long corridor to a young doctor who said the man was dying—or perhaps was dead. They were taken into the dark ward, and led between rows of folding beds, every one of them occupied, till they came to the last bed on the left. In the next to the last bed a young man, evidently a mechanic's apprentice, lay propped up on his elbows, staring dumb and wide-eyed at the last bed, in which Jonni Dau was lying. Huddled together, and looking more quiet and decent than he had ever looked when he was alive, he seemed to be quietly stooping to squeeze himself into some corner on a regular Hamburg rainy day.

They stood for a while motionless, looking down at the dead man; then they sat down on the edge of the young workman's bed, still looking at Jonni. Kalli Dau rubbed his hands between his knees till they cracked. He asked the young man whether his brother had said anything about where his mother and the children were.

The young man said that he had told them that his mother had committed an assault on a girl that had been carrying on a love affair with her husband, and had embezzled some money, too. The children were in the almshouse.

Kalli Dau hunched himself together till he looked a little like his dead brother, and rubbed his hands harder than ever. Then he said, in his grandfatherly way, "Our sailmaker, who lives somewhere on the Deich here, ran across an old friend once that he hadn't seen for a long time, and one of the things he asked him was, 'Say, Hans, or Peter, or whatever the fellow's name was, how are

your children getting along?’ The man made such a face that the cold shivers ran down the sailmaker’s back, and said, ‘Ask me about anything else in the world, but don’t you ask me any questions about my children.’ And that’s what I say — ask me about anything else in the world, ask me about a hundred comrades, ask me about ten or twenty fore-castle visitors, yes, ask me about Mother Kindt in Hopfen Strasse, who has been pretty good to me, ask me about Frau Marie in the wineshop on Liverpool Street in Sydney — but don’t you ask me any questions about my father and mother. Sometimes when we were on watch, the others would say, ‘Say, Kalli, what does your father do? Why don’t you ever talk about your father and mother?’ Then I said, ‘My family’s rotten all through. Does anybody want to fight with me?’ Then they left me in peace. That fourth commandment always made me mad, even when I was a youngster. I think that commandment read the other way round a few hundred years ago, for the children are decenter and more sensible than their parents, every time. Well : now we won’t talk about it any more. He slipped in the slime of the Hamburg streets ; well, it’s slippery enough ; I nearly fell in it myself. But I jumped on to the deck, do you remember, Klaus? I couldn’t help him at all — my conscience is clear — absolutely clear —”

He shook his head. Two attendants came up to carry away the bed.

“I was on the *Santa Barbara* a whole year,” Kalli Dau said, still lost in thought. “It was an Italian fourmaster, and a little out of date. It didn’t have a regular capstan for the anchor, for instance, — but a sort of pump-arrangement, the kind they used to make about the year one ; and the food just about matched it ; and at first I couldn’t understand their language. But except for that it was quite enjoyable — sit down,” he said to the attendants ; “you must have a little time to spare, and can let me have my talk out. Well, there were two men on board that had been working in Brazil for years, on a railroad that was being built there, and now they were going back

to Italy with their savings; they both had a wife and children waiting for them. One of them was a jolly fellow, the loudest laugher and the liveliest talker on the whole ship, and that's saying something, too, for all the rest were Italians but me. The other was a false chap, you could tell it by his eyes; and his laugh always came after everybody else's, and it wasn't a good laugh to hear. Well, one black night, after we had had a storm that lasted for three days and nights and beat us far to the south of our course, and tired us all out, it was the jolly fellow's turn to stand the lookout. I told you it was a black night, and the weather was still bad, and we were dog-tired; I imagine we were all asleep. But an hour later, when some one happened to go forward, the lookout man was gone. We looked for him, but couldn't find him, so we supposed that he had fallen overboard. Then the captain opened the dead man's chest. And there was no money in it, not one single milreis.

“ Well, from then on every one of us twenty-two men went around thinking that some one of the others was a murderer. And the next thing, each of us was saying so to the man he had the most confidence in. We could see that thought in every other man's eyes, ‘ You didn't do it, ’ or ‘ Did you do it ? ’ but never, ‘ You did it. ’ The men that were standing watch together didn't speak to each other; the men that were asleep, off watch, groaned as they slept; the men that were at the wheel together didn't take hold of the same spoke. Only the cabin-boy, a little orange seller, that they had brought along from the Via Balbi in Genoa, whistled away all day as usual, because he didn't know anything about gold and glitter, and couldn't imagine doing such a thing.

“ Well, this went on for three, four days or more, and all this time we had bad weather. It was like living in a house of correction that has no manager and that's going to fall to pieces any minute. We hadn't any belief in ourselves any longer, or in any one else; we didn't feel any laws in ourselves or above ourselves; we had just stopped being human. And so, not keeping anything

shipshape, we drove on through bad weather toward Madeira.

“And then, one dark, cloudy evening, — we were driving along with a brisk southwest wind that whistled and howled in the sails, — all at once a long cry came from up forward, the sort of cry that draws you. I’ll never forget it as long as I live. We rushed out of the cabin; the men aft called out through the darkness to ask what was wrong forward. The cry came again; it sounded as if it came from a tortured soul; it called us and made us come. Every man of us rushed out of the cabin and up the gangway, panic-stricken. And again and again that horrible deep cry came from forward.

“We asked each other wildly who had been keeping the lookout. The lookout stepped up and said that he had just run over to the cabin to get his pipe when the first cry came. We counted noses; we were all there. And the cry kept coming, making us tremble like masts in a storm. I suppose we had stood there talking and shouting for several minutes — things go fast in a time like that — when the moon came out from under a cloud, and up forward we saw a figure standing by the larboard crane-beam, in the shade of the fore-stay-sail. And the figure beckoned to us to come.

“Then the captain got up and went down the gangway amidships toward it. But when he had got to the cabin, the figure motioned to him to go back. Then the mate went over; and he too was sent back. Then all the other men cowering around the skylight went over. They went along, one after another, as timidly as if the deck was a sheet of thin ice; some of them whimpered, others called on all the saints, some confessed out loud all sorts of petty, miserable things they had done. I was astonished to see what filth and slime the human heart can hold.

“Finally it seemed as if only the boy and I were left. The boy, who had never done anything before but whistle and sing, cowered at my feet. He shut his eyes, held his ears, and whimpered. I pulled him up, took him by the arm, and dragged him down the gangway, screaming



out loud, and holding his hands over his eyes; but I looked straight ahead, for I had a good conscience and wasn't afraid of God or the devil. When I got to the cabin, I could see the figure clearly, standing in the gray darkness. I couldn't recognize it, but I could see how it held its head forward as if it was trying to see who was coming. Then I pulled the boy's hands off his eyes and he stared over, but the figure waved him off. He ran back shrieking. I was left alone.

"Then I drew out my knife. I thought, I'll stick it in his heart or in mine. I went three steps nearer, and shrieked out at him: 'I slept with the innkeeper's daughter in Christiansand,—she was fifteen and I was seventeen,—was that a sin—eh? I brought the boy down off the mainyard in a storm off Newfoundland, when the yard was swinging loose by a rope, and no one else would go up.' Then I screamed out loud into the wind and struck around with my knife, and called out against God and the devil, so that he would know my conscience was good; and I was going to make a rush on him, but when I got to the gangway up to the larboard side, he waved me off. I had my mind made up to get at him, and I sprang up the gangway. But then I saw from the way he stood and looked that he was there on some one else's errand; and I went back slowly; I could hear my breath come with a rattle, and my whole body was as wet as if I had just been pulled out of the water. And behind me came that gruesome cry.

"Most of the men were lying huddled up, their heads between their shoulders, eyes and ears shut, groaning and praying, some gently, some loudly. The captain sat there dumb, with his arms folded in distress. He was a good, brave man. The mate was crying bitterly. And that cry kept coming all the time from the poop, impatient, agonized, as if it came from some terrible throat that was not human. Some men screamed out that we had all been over; even the dead man's friend raised his head and screamed it.

"Then I took hold. I pulled up each one and asked

the others if he had been over; and there was always some one who could bear witness for him, till I came to the dead man's friend, and there was no one that could vouch for him. Then three or four of us said he had to go. He refused, and swore, and hugged the captain's knees, and shrieked like a wild beast. But the mate and I picked him up and pulled him along past the cabin; and then we saw the figure motion to him to come. I saw clearly that it motioned the way the Italians do, from above downwards, not the way we do, from below up. We let go of him, and pointed to him to go over. He saw that there was no help in the world for him; shaking and whimpering he went up the gangway, and disappeared in the darkness. We heard a sort of death-rattle, and that was all. I stood at the wheel all the rest of the night; and around me stood or lay twenty men.

"The next morning, in the presence of all the crew, the captain opened the chest of the man who had been called away. We found nothing in it, but hidden in his bed we found the dead man's money. From that time on we felt like human beings again; we cleaned up the ship, and stood watch regularly, and got to Genoa all right. You see—it all depends on having a good conscience. Your conscience has to be all right. Then everything's all right. Even when you go striking out against God and the devil with your knife in your hand! I—I can't help it that this man here slipped in the mud of the streets; he was older than I was—and then I had to jump on deck and get out of the mud myself—"

Kalli did not look at his dead brother again; nodding to the young workman and to the attendants, he got up and went out, Klaus Baas bringing up the rear in silence.

When Kalli was outside again with his sack on his shoulder and his parrots in his hand, he stood for a while undecided where to go.

"Come home with me, Kalli," Klaus Baas said. "Come and have supper with us."

Kalli Dau stood looking down at the ground. His thin brown face had grown pale. "I suppose I might go with

you," he said, "or I might go to see an old great-uncle of mine that lives in Blankenese. But why should I stay around here if I can't go to see my mother and my brothers and sisters?" He shook his head thoughtfully. "The best thing for me to do is to go straight to Bremen. I can get taken on there on a bark that's going to Vancouver. Yes, that's what I'll do."

He set his bundles down again, and pulling out four hundred marks in gold and paper, gave them to Klaus Baas, saying, "Put it in the savings bank, and if she — oh, you know — ever needs it, give it to her, but only one mark at a time, do you hear?" He looked at the sack, not knowing what to do with it. "I wanted to bring some things to her and the children," he said; "well, you can just give them to your youngsters." He brought out all sorts of trifles — a little casket made of black wood, a few fans made of fine straw, and several cocoanuts; then he tied up the sack again with great care. He looked at the two parrots; it was a wrench, parting with them; but he said, "Oh, just give them to Hanna. She's a nice little girl, and she'll take good care of them. And perhaps I'll come back to see you some day. Tell her to sprinkle them with camphor now and then to keep the moths out. Do you want to go along to the station?"

On the way Klaus Baas asked, "Are you rated now as a regular able-bodied seaman?"

He nodded.

"Are you going to try to work up to be a mate?"

Kalli Dau denied that with a decisive shake of his head. "You haven't got very much sense!" he said. "Do you think I went to sea just to get a fine, easy job like that, and to walk the deck with a stiff collar on? No, sir; I'm going to be a seaman on a sailing vessel, and that's all there is to it."

Half an hour later, when they came out of the waiting-room, they found the train ready to start. Kalli Dau pushed along through the throng, on a trot, carrying his sack on his shoulder. Just as Klaus Baas came up behind him, he threw his sack straight into a fourth class com-

partment, so that a fat, elderly woman had hardly time to jump aside.

“Good gracious!” she said, “how rough some folks are!”

“You must keep out of the way, mother!” he said, following his sack in. He shook hands with Klaus Baas and disappeared in the compartment.

The next evening, as Klaus left the office, Karl Eschen came down the stairs behind him. In his deliberate way, he said, “I noticed that you didn’t altogether like having that sailor visit you. If I may say so, I consider it altogether wrong to keep up such friendships. I do not say that such people are common, or that they have too little culture; but going about with persons of a different class from one’s own, whether they are of a higher class or a lower, makes one lose the correct feeling for his own class and makes him less assured. Of course I know that your friendship with this sailor isn’t a matter of rank sentimentality, like Heini Peters’s friendship with a dozen young girls and half a dozen sextons; I understand that it’s an old attachment. But you must make up your mind whether this attachment and loyalty does good to you and the sailor, or harm.”

Klaus Baas listened in silence. He was very conscious of that lack of assurance of which Eschen spoke, and he could see plainly how he could make himself more composed, perhaps like the very man who was talking to him with so much quiet assurance. The next evening, however, when he heard Eschen’s step behind him, he waited for him, to tell him that that sailor had done him many a good turn when they were children together, and that that made him feel like keeping up the friendship; and that he felt just the same way about his mother and the other children. Even though he would be hampered all his life by the fact that he came from people of a rather low station, and that he still belonged there, still he would rather put up with that disadvantage than feel that he had betrayed an old friend. And even if that did make it more difficult for him to get along, get along he would, nevertheless!

Eschen nodded deliberately. "That sounds reasonable," he said, with curt politeness. Then he went on.

Klaus Baas went on toward home. As he went along through the crowd going down Berg Strasse, he resolved that he would indeed get on! For a long time he had been conscious that he was gradually getting a deeper understanding of the real meaning of mercantile activity. He realized that the office work he had been doing for these three years was work of only second-rate importance — nothing but what a sort of loyal conscientious upper clerk could do; to a person who wanted to climb higher, such work amounted to nothing more than getting used to his tools. To be a real merchant, more than this was necessary; he had to be able to perceive the needs that civilization had created, or perhaps to discover new needs, or perhaps even to create them; and then he must know how to satisfy these needs, swiftly, wisely, in a way that would give a return on the capital he was using, without being unjust. Klaus had learned to use the tools of his trade; he had proved that he was wide awake and practical, and that he took a real pleasure in his work — was even greedy for work sometimes. And so he was entitled to hope, and really did hope now, that this constant pondering on things and their connections would bring him some day to some sort of independent, successful work.

On a bright, though sunless, September day, he went to the office for the last time. His apprentice years were over. He spent the morning estimating the value of the cargo of wood, oil, and food supplies of all kinds that was to go from San Francisco to the Tonga Islands, and sent a statement of the total to the insurance agent. He sent a telegram to their principal branch office, directing them on no account to go over the prescribed limit in buying copra. And he gave his successor the necessary explanations about his books and work.

Then the chief called him into his office and gave him a good round sum to see him through the two years of military service. The chief spoke pleasantly about Klaus's work, and Klaus, with glowing eyes, expressed his grati-

tude for having learned in these rooms how to work hard and intensely and to take pleasure in it. Then he went down the old worn stairs and hurried home.

Antje Baas was working with the girls in the workroom. Klaus went into the kitchen and lighted the old whale oil lamp. Sitting down at the table, he spread out his twenty mark pieces, one after another, and revelled in their pretty, dull glow, brought out against the brown table by the dim, unsteady light. As his mother did not come in, he began to scrape his chair and shuffle his feet.

That brought Antje Baas in at last. Klaus pointed to the gold with a silent, insolent sweep of his hand, and she saw it lying there. Her eyes opened wide, and in her curt, jerky way, she praised the chief and scolded Klaus. "How can a grown-up man be so fond of playing! You're just like your father!"

"Well, then," he said hastily, "that must be why you were so fond of father!"

She gave him a strange, haughty look, and grew red. "What do you know about that?" she said.

He pushed his gold pieces back and forth, keeping his eyes on the table. "I'm twenty now, mother!" he said. After a while, seeing that she did not get angry, he went on, "Mother, it isn't right for you to make Hanna be a tailor; she doesn't like it at all. And a person doesn't learn anything in a calling he doesn't like."

In his former words Antje Baas had seen for the first time that Klaus was becoming a man. So for the first time in her life she asked his advice.

Speaking slowly and deliberately, so as not to lose her good opinion, Klaus said, "She did so well at school, and she has always been so fond of helping the children with their lessons; and she wants to be a teacher. Let's use four hundred marks for that. I can get along these two years while I'm a soldier."

She sat down at the table opposite him. "You want to hand over four hundred marks?" she said curtly. "You'll never be anything."

"Yes, I will!" he said weightily. "This proves it.

I'm acting like an honest merchant. Why, it's your money; you've always supported me."

As she did not answer, he called Hanna out of the sewing room, and showed her the gold, rather boastfully. "You're to go to the seminary!" he said.

She clapped her hands over her head in surprise, sat down, and like the young girl she was, laid her head on the table and began to cry. She had inherited her father's temperament, and suffered keenly from the utterly different nature of her mother, with whom she had been working from morning till evening, in the same room.

Then Antje Baas got up, saying, in her old harsh tone: "You two will never grow up! Are you going to leave that money lying there till to-morrow? Put it away!" and she went back to her sewing.

Then Klaus and Hanna talked everything over. At first they were a little depressed at their mother's unsympathetic tone, but soon they grew cheerful again. Finally Klaus told her that he was going back home to-morrow — to their uncle the pastor's.

Pulling out Suse Garbens's letters, he showed her some of them, and pointed out the way they all ended, — "I am, with a thousand k—." "What do you think that k— stands for?" he said.

She nodded, laughing.

"We've been writing to each other for two years," he said, with rather a large air, "but she has never written that word out. I'm going there now to tell her that now she's to write it out! She hasn't written at all for six months; I can't imagine what's got into the little girl's noddle. Well — it's time I went over there."

## CHAPTER XII

SHE was really standing waiting for him in the empty little station. She was smaller than he had supposed she would be, — had not grown much taller indeed than she was the night she went to sleep on the floor in front of the bureau. But she had grown mature as the warm, beautiful autumn day, and was even prettier than the picture she had sent him a year ago. He had set out with a great deal of confidence; but in the face of such ripeness and cheerful assurance, it began to slip away.

With a free laugh that lit up her whole face, brown eyes and all, she said, "What a lot of writing we two have been doing!"

"Oh!" he said, a little reproachfully, coming to the point at once, "and a thousand kisses every time!"

She laughed again. "Not so far as that! only a thousand k—! Thank heaven, I never wrote it out! But it was fun just the same! You really write awfully nice letters — neat and polite. They're a little instructive now and then, but that doesn't matter, I suppose. Just think, six months ago I fell in love with a student. That was why I stopped writing to you. But it wasn't anything serious."

"Why not?" Klaus asked, and his voice shook.

"Well," she said, with the same cheerful assurance, "he couldn't get married for three years, and he hadn't any money, either; so it would have been silly, of course. Of course I'm telling you all this in confidence! But just think! I am really engaged now! Eight days ago! to a man that owns an estate! He's good-looking and clever, and about thirty-five — and father says that some day he'll be elected to the Chamber of Deputies. That's



enough about him; but I wanted to tell you about it right away, because he's to be at our house for dinner to-day."

Poor Klaus Baas's heart sank at this news. For a while he looked stiffly down the road so as not to look in her gleaming eyes. "So that's it!" he thought; "so that's it! For years I've been thinking about you—for years! You're beautiful, oh, how beautiful you are! But you needn't think that I'll let you see how I feel! Well—I'm twenty years old—twenty! And you girl, you pretty, horrid thing, you, there are lots more like you! I'll get a sweetheart yet in spite of you!" And in a voice of feigned cheerfulness he began a series of loud, hearty questions, about what the man's name was, how large his estate was, and so on. And all the while he was scolding himself for his stupidity. "How could I be such a fool to think that everything was just the way I wanted it! Just on account of the thousand k—! Oh, I'm a good merchant! Not to know the difference between the mere form of a bond and the bond itself! I'll never get caught like this again in all my life! That's just like the Baases! Damn it all! I'll be suspicious! I'll investigate everything! I'll be prepared for anything! Well—I'm twenty, twenty years old!" Swinging his cane, he asked her when the wedding was to be. She said that they were to live for several months each year in Berlin, where her husband had to go to look after some sort of honorary office for his province.

When Klaus said that she seemed to be making a good match, the bright little witch said that she was a good match herself, because she was the only child of parents who had property, and was also the heiress of an uncle who had no children.

Since her affairs were so prosperous, Klaus thought he had better touch up his own a little; so he said that after his military service was over he was to set off across the seas at once; it looked now as if he were to go to Brazil. He made up some things to tell about his mother and sisters, too, and did not hold back even when he noticed

that he was getting suspiciously near to boastful lying again. This was no time to stop with a little story; this was the time to tell a good big one. "I've just got to hold my own with her, and I will; and then I'll never come here again." He went along beside her, so cheerful that he almost managed to make her think that he had never thought seriously of her. Then she took greater pleasure in telling him all the details of her happy lot.

Her parents, who had, in the course of all these years, begun to get gray-haired, and to think rather more about being comfortable, received Klaus rather cordially, praised his fine bearing, said he was a promising young man, and sent him out to the garden till supper time.

When he went back to the house, the engaged couple met him on the threshold. The blue silk gown which Suse had put on in honor of the occasion fitted her plump figure well; and he was a fine looking, well grown man. They went in to dinner. They had good wine to drink. Klaus Baas drank it, put a word into the conversation now and then like all the others, and hugged a feeling that he was safe. The country gentleman soon began to ask what sort of firm P. C. Trimborn's was. Klaus answered him like a man who understands thoroughly what he is talking about, and who knows how to set forth as much as it is well to tell. The countryman expatiated on the significance to the national economy of our foreign trade, which had just reached the period of its great development. He worked in the history of Portugal, Holland, and England, speaking always from the point of view of his position and calling, with the meditative care of a man who sees in the past history of the world some pictures that cheer him and some that terrify him. Klaus Baas was not deficient in historical feeling; and he had read of one thing and another in mercantile handbooks and in the great Hamburg papers. Of regular teaching, however, he had had very little; and anyhow, at twenty a man is no historian; he is a philosopher. So Klaus came out with all sorts of generalizations, which had come into his head while he was working along. He had never had any opportunity to tell them to any one;

but sitting in this intimate little circle, with a glass of wine, brought them out. He talked about the sale of brandy and muskets, about all kinds of rubbish put into the wares that were exported, about ethical and æsthetical obligations, about Bismarck and the civilization of the world. His talk was a hash of Klaus Baas and the Hamburg newspapers. His deductions became more superb, his assertions more sweeping. Turning his wineglass skilfully between his fingers, — it was the first time in his life he had ever sat in good company drinking wine, — he said finally that “in general” the government ought to guarantee that the whole matter of manufacturing and selling goods would become really moral and clean. So on he went a while longer, with “in general” and “in general.”

His uncle, the pastor, laughed scornfully, looking on at this new miracle coldly; his wife thought, “Immature! He’ll fall on his nose!” Suse sat leaning against the table, so that her full breast was more prominent; she looked at him with great friendly eyes, thinking how good-looking he was. Her fiancé, one of those political people who cannot let other people’s mistakes and opinions alone, but have to study out where they came from, then oppose them, improve on them, and finally inculcate their own opinions, listened attentively, already working away on his answer.

When Klaus Baas had finally said his last “in general,” the fiancé said, in a dry, rather suspicious tone, which in itself was a great contrast to Klaus’s great hot words, that the views the young guest had expressed were noble, and quite natural at his age; but every single thing and its connection with all other things had to be weighed very carefully, and was not to be judged “in general.” In the long run, all that could be expected of a government was that it should consider all the ordinary opinions and efforts, taking one with another; all that you could ask of a government was that it should attempt, wisely and perseveringly, to direct and to raise the standard of all these inclinations and tendencies. A nation was not like one

single skilful rider ; neither was it like a wild herd, storming along : it might be compared to a heavily laden army train, for which the questions of defence, road building, provisioning, and resting-place all required the most careful deliberation. And the wise man spoke on, in his rather squeaky voice, for some time.

At the first sound of his well weighed, meditative words, Klaus Baas had made the confusing discovery that he had flown far too high and had fallen ; then he was even more chagrined to find that he had done it before a man who was his superior in study and experience ; and worst of all, that this man did not make fun of his big words, but argued with him in simple, honorable friendliness. Klaus still acted as if he were listening carefully to his opponent's explanations, and as if he were getting a formidable answer ready. In his heart, however, he felt very small and very much ashamed. " Flew as high as a tower," he was thinking, " and came down with a bang ! Here I'm flopping with my wings on the ground ! I'm absolutely ridiculous ! " When the other man stopped, Klaus managed to screw up an embarrassed smile, and to say that he probably was too young, and thought things were a great deal easier to do than they were.

When they left the table, Klaus stood aside, turning over the leaves of a book, while he tasted the full bitterness of his defeat again, and wished that he were far away. He slipped along to the door, and went out. Standing under the great linden, he looked out into the beautiful evening, pondering bitterly on his downfall, and wondering if it would be possible to set himself right again.

Suse, stepping lightly out of the door, seized him from behind by both arms ; standing thus, half behind him, her breast touching him, she said, in a friendly, sisterly way, " Listen, you — I'll make you a very wise proposition ! To-day they're having the annual fair in Boosdorf ; they'll have a fine time dancing there to-night. I went to the spring fair with my sweetheart, the student ; it was awfully pretty, but this autumn fair is prettier still. Our next neighbor has two nice children who are going to drive

over. The boy is about your age—rather a rogue, and he stutters a little; the girl is between sixteen and seventeen, just right for you. She's a dear, peculiar little thing. You'll have to go by yourself, though."

Klaus Baas, turning, said with some cheerfulness, "But how can I get acquainted with them?"

She looked amused. "They saw you come," she said, "and when you were in the garden, Jess—that's what we call her—was at the kitchen window already, to say, 'Talk him into going with us this evening; he strikes me as a very decent fellow'—I'll get your hat and coat." She went in and got his things and then went over to the neighbor's with him.

As they passed the open barn door, they saw that the carriage was ready, and went straight in. The brother and sister were bustling around with carriage robes and overcoats that would be needed on the drive home. The brother was a tall, angular fellow, with strong features, which were still rather undeveloped; it was easy to see, however, that some day he would be a very good-looking man. His sister, though blond like her brother, was much darker than he; her face was quite as noble as his, but its soft delicate fulness contrasted sharply with the sharpness and angularity of his face. Her eyes had a soft, shy watchfulness. It would not have been easy to find two creatures who were more perfect specimens of manly strength and womanly beauty than these two were. Meeting Klaus simply and naturally, they shook hands with him, and said that it was nice that he was going along; they liked to have company, especially on the way home.

"Now say 'thou' to each other right away," Suse said. "What's the good of that stiff 'you'?"

They took their places on the one seat of the carriage, the girl sitting in the middle, and drove off. As the seat was a little too narrow for three persons, Klaus had to sit sidewise, turned toward her, with his arm along the back of the seat, almost round her. His healthy, impressionable nature made him have a high opinion of women, and he

had never been so close to a pretty girl before. And so it came about, that when he had scarcely had one good look at the soft line of her face and at her beautiful shimmering eyes, when he had hardly heard her speak a single word, he fell in love with her. He forgot Suse Garbens, and disowned her. How much more delicate and beautiful this girl was! What a fine, noble face she had! What dear, blue eyes! What tiny, firm hands! What charming thoughts must play about under her beautifully curved forehead, and what tender feelings must have their home in the round breast that curved so delicately under the loose black jacket!

Her brother asked him a few questions about what he did in Hamburg. In the meantime she let her eyes wander over the beautiful wooded country, letting them whisk by him now and then, however. Klaus told about Hamburg, and then asked some questions himself, to show that he knew a good deal about farming too, watching as he talked to catch her glances. He succeeded every time, and every time she turned her eyes away immediately; and so did he.

This beautiful old play went on for a good while, until the brother, feeling more assured, began to tease his sister in front of their guest. "Why are you so quiet?" he asked. "At home she talks so much that neither father nor mother, nor I, her only brother, can get a word in edgewise. Is it because a man from Hamburg is sitting beside you? You see, she has never been anywhere, and doesn't know anything about anything, and you can make her swallow anything. Or is it that you don't want to let him see that you can't talk quite right? You see, she has a little lisp."

He made fun for a while of the way she talked. This seemed all the more absurd, because his own tongue was rather thick; in fact, he stuttered sometimes.

She let him say whatever he wanted, only throwing in a careless, indifferent word now and then. Once she gave Klaus Baas a shy, swift glance, saying, "All that he says is lies."

Klaus Baas backed up her brother, saying, "But there must be some truth in it, since it's your only brother that says it."

She shrugged her shoulders, and looked at him with an inquiring frown, as if to say, "Have you lost your wits too?"

The brother, who evidently enjoyed what he was saying, was glad to have their guest help him out. "Didn't Suse Garbens warn you about my sister?" he said.

"She hinted at something," Klaus said, "but she didn't want to say it out; so it must have been something pretty bad."

"Yes," her brother said, "it is pretty bad and pretty dangerous, too. Just listen—she looks so gentle and meditative, just like a calf when it's full and sleepy; and that soft way she has of opening her eyes and looking at you makes her seem even more so; but I tell you, there's a kind of devil at the bottom of her heart, and sometimes he jumps out suddenly. Then she has to smash something or tear something up, or do something crazy."

Klaus, looking at her, could see that this did not please her. She looked straight ahead, with a fixed, stiff glance. Her brother was not disturbed by her look. "Once, when she was a little child," he went on, "she got cross at her pony because it always raised its head when she went to put the bit in its mouth; then she got furiously angry, and bit its nose so hard that it threw its head up and jerked her up off her feet. That kind of a temper, that flares up like that, costs us a new window-pane at home now and then; you can see how that would be. But we have the small, old-fashioned window-panes all over the house, so it really isn't so very expensive."

She was still listening quietly. Her eyes, gentle as ever, wandered over the fields and over the people they passed, and sometimes fell on Klaus Baas. She even turned to him once, saying, in a rather forced voice, as if she were trying to make herself joke, "It amuses my father and brother to tease me. They're both a little stupid, so they can't entertain themselves."

Klaus said hypocritically, "It's very wrong of your father and brother to treat you that way. If I were your brother — I wish I were — I'd treat you like a little porcelain statuette."

She tried to laugh, but did not succeed very well. "You're no better than he is," she said gloomily.

"Well," the brother went on, "you'd better not wish fate had made you her brother! Why, the other day, when father and I had been teasing her a little while we were having coffee, I followed her into her room, where she was changing her dress, and said something or other —"

He did not get any farther. She started up suddenly with an angry cry; her eyes were like firebrands, and they could hear her breath come and go. She struck her brother on the head so hard that his cap flew off, snatched the lines out of his hand, and pushed him aside. Then she jerked on the horses till they broke into a gallop.

Klaus Baas, who had been sitting rather close to her while they were teasing her, leaned back a little now, terrified. Looking toward her brother, who was leaning back too, Klaus saw that he was silent and a little pale. He did not move, but looked at Klaus in anxiety, begging him to keep still; otherwise heaven only knew what she would do.

Several people from the village, who knew them, passed them, and called out, "What, have you got her going again?" Other passers-by, who did not know them, looked with a laugh at their carriage, where the two boys were sitting huddled back in the corners while the young girl was sitting bolt upright between them, looking very angry, and driving with a very tight rein. Although Klaus Baas had teased her less than her brother had, he took very good care not to let a single word slip out; he saw that she was blind and dumb with unreasoning fury.

They all sat stiff and motionless. Slowly, gradually, her attitude became less fixed; her breath came more easily; the furrows around her eyes and brow smoothed themselves out, and the knuckles of her firm little hands, which had got snow-white from her painful clutch on the lines, grew



rosy again. The others were still very careful not to say a word, but they straightened up a little, and exchanged a silent anxious look.

Klaus did not see much of the pretty country they were driving through, nor did he notice much of anything about the people they met, although they passed many a carriage full of jolly people coming home from the fair. All his thoughts were with her; and, in spite of her fit of anger, all her thoughts were with him. Klaus took it as a matter of course that she would dance with him all the time; but she informed him that he could have only every third dance, and that he must ask other girls to be his partners the rest of the time, so that people would not notice it too much and get angry at him. So he had to look on and see one young man after another go up, make a more or less awkward bow, and lead her out to dance; and he had to look on while she talked pleasantly and rather vivaciously with her partner, and while they asked her about him. Every time that this happened, her eyes sought him out and gave him a long, quiet look, as if he were her own private property.

Toward midnight the crowd of dancers grew thinner. One pair after another disappeared through a door. Klaus asked the brother where they were all going, and learned that they were "going to drink wine"—and then he remembered having heard that dark, mysterious phrase when he was a child.

Klaus went to her at once, and asked her, with some trepidation, if she would drink a glass of wine with him.

Her shy glance flitted past him again; then, looking down, and moving the tip of her shoe about a little, she said: "I have refused three invitations already. One of them was from a very nice fellow; I've drunk wine with him before; but I kept thinking that you would come and ask me." She slipped her hand into his arm.

They went out of the hall and down the stairs. They looked into the different parlors, but they were all full of couples; even the smaller rooms were taken by two or three pairs. In some rooms they were sitting around the

light singing and drinking ; in other rooms they had put the light out and were spooning.

This kind of thing pleased Klaus Baas immensely, and he wanted to take part in it with his sweetheart, who was going along arm in arm with him in such good humor, speaking now and then to an acquaintance. But they could not find a place. Several very small rooms, which Klaus tried to open, were locked.

Then they and several other couples went across to the inn where they had left their carriage. After a search, they found one little room still unoccupied. They did not try at all to hide their joy when the other couples, quarrelling, separated from them and left them sitting with their bottle of wine all alone in the tiny little room. The full moonlight slanted down into the room clear to the threshold. The window-sill in the old building was low and very broad, and they sat down on it, silently, too shy to talk, with their bottle of wine and the glasses between them. Holding each other's hands cautiously between the glasses, they talked about themselves. The soft moonlight shone on their light hair and on their soft young limbs ; Klaus bent his head forward, feeling a strong desire to be nearer to her. And so they talked away in low voices, just as a man talks when he is sitting listening to a beautiful melody that is being played off in the distance.

Since she was so confidential, Klaus asked her, seriously and cautiously, what made her get so angry.

Leaving her hand in his, she answered good-humoredly, "Oh, now you're asking too much. My mother was that way too, when she was young, till after her first baby was born, and she saw how pitiful and helpless it was, — you know a baby is lots more helpless than a calf when it is born, — and then she pitied it so that she has never been angry since. She only laughs now when they tease her."

"But," Klaus said, "how does it come that everybody teases you so? I saw that even some of your partners and the other girls tried to stir you up."

"Why?" she said; "oh, ask the cat why it has whiskers. If I say, 'Why do you torment me?' some people

say, 'Oh, you look so pleasant and gentle that people like you, and people tease the folks they like.' And others say, 'Oh, because you look so dear and good that it makes a person wonder whether you possibly could get angry.' And others say, 'Why, we know that you do boil over, and so we keep getting things a little hotter and a little hotter, and it makes us creep all over, wondering just when you're going to boil over.' People all have their peculiarities ; and you have got yours, too."

"What would you have done," Klaus said, "if we hadn't kept as still as mice?"

"Oh, something pretty bad," she said. "Perhaps I'd have made the horses run away and throw you out in the ditch — perhaps I'd have jumped out of the carriage and run home across the fields. I've got to let it out somehow, or it just splits my head open."

He held her hands tighter and gave them a friendly little shake. "Do you think you'd be more rational," he asked, "if you had been beaten for getting so angry when you were little?"

She shook her head. "I'd have got as stiff as a fence-post. And why should I be beaten? Haven't you seen for yourself that I'm a pleasant tempered person, and that people like me? Is it my fault that people are always pouring hot water into my shoes? I really don't like getting so angry ; it's a miserable, horrible way to feel. But there's something in me that makes lots of people tease me — and it's queer, but it's the good people, most of all. But we aren't sitting here just to talk about this bothersome old thing." She picked up the glasses slowly, as if she were unconsciously putting things in order, like a good housekeeper, and put them on the table. Klaus did the same thing with the bottle.

She asked him about his mother and the other children. Her hand in his again, she listened while he told her about the office and his associates there. Enjoying his story, she bent nearer, looking at him with pride and interest, even with affection.

Letting go her hand gently, he stroked her arm and

shoulder, hardly master of his desires. A breathless feeling of unspeakable happiness streamed over him and he stammered out how very dear and beautiful she was.

She listened quietly and good-humoredly, her clear eyes looking all the while at his mouth, as if she did not want to lose a single breath from it. He talked on in a low voice, caressing her arm and shoulder, and looking at her all the time. After a while she bent her head forward against the window-frame, leaning nearer to him, just like a colt holding its head down to be petted. Then Klaus ventured shyly to kiss her. And gradually she drew nearer. Leaning her head against his arm, she held her mouth up to him speechlessly and artlessly. Kissing her, and drinking in the sweetness of her being with his eyes as well, Klaus was intoxicated with happiness; his soul was full of praise and reverence for the nature which had created such pure, holy beauty and love, and he felt unspeakably happy and thankful.

They said very little; they only looked at each other and exchanged kisses. By and by he said, "You mustn't ever forget me; swear that you will always remember me."

She shook her head calmly—it was still resting on his arm. "I never swear at all," she said; "I think it's too mysterious. And then I don't know you well enough at all; and I'm only sixteen."

Klaus was surprised. "Then why do you let me kiss you?" he asked.

"Why, young men like to kiss girls, don't they?" she said. "Don't the girls in Hamburg do that? Don't you like it? And how can you get to know a man any other way than by being alone with him and kissing him? We all do it here. Then the ones that like each other go on and get married; and the ones that don't like each other separate and look for some one else. How do people dare to get married, if they haven't been kissing each other and getting to know each other for at least a year?"

But Klaus protested stoutly that he knew her through and through and loved her beyond anything.

In her gentle, pleasant way, she shook her head again, and settled it more comfortably on his arm. "I won't promise anything, not even for to-morrow, still less for next week — and less still for next year. Why, perhaps I won't like you the next time I see you — perhaps you won't like me; so you mustn't talk about that at all." Holding up her mouth to him again, she let him caress her, happy and composed, in shy, yet confidential amorous absorption.

After playing this delightful game for a while, Klaus said, "How soft your hands are! You little rascal, I don't believe you work at all. You must have a pretty easy time of it at the farm-house, eh, — the only daughter, with everybody spoiling you?"

But she insisted, as well as she could — for he was kissing her all the time — that she worked all morning, often all day; she said that she took care of her room all alone, and only yesterday had got down on her knees and scrubbed it. She rubbed her hand against his to show him how rough it was. But when he stuck to his opinion and said that she was a little idler and couldn't do anything but kiss, she pulled her skirt up and let him rub his hand over the rough place on her knee. "Now do you believe it?" she said, smoothing her skirt down again.

Klaus, almost dumbfounded because she was so intimate, wanted more; he tried to begin it cunningly, kissing her eyes and cheeks more passionately and pushing aside the white lace frill around her neck.

But in a flash she bit him on the right eyebrow. Jumping up, breathing heavily, she straightened her clothing into place around her neck and waist, and went out.

Klaus stood up, all at once very much horrified and unhappy. Hurrying along behind her, he caught up to her and walked along beside her without daring to say a word. In the yard she ordered the carriage to be got ready, and sent for her brother, who came at once.

She sat down in the middle again, seized the lines angrily, and drove off through the streets of the town out into the still quiet night. It had grown darker. Klaus

could see by the stiff way she sat that she was not calm yet, so he kept very still. Her brother, who had been ploughing all day, was so tired that he went to sleep.

The horses began to put the lonely straight road behind them in a steady, sturdy trot. There was a glimmer of dawn in the east. As she looked out over the dark fields to the fringe of trees, the tension of her spirit and her body gradually relaxed, and soon she said an indifferent word or two about the horses.

Then Klaus said that he was sorry. Looking ahead down the road, she said quietly, in a tone that had no anger in it, "Oh, that isn't necessary. You aren't any different now — and if you are, we don't like that. It just didn't suit me to have you try to deceive me. If you had said what you wanted openly and plainly at the beginning, perhaps I'd have done it. Well — drop it now — I must attend to the horses."

It was beginning to get light when they drove into the farm-yard. Klaus Baas took leave, with a hasty handshake, and went to the back door of the parsonage. Suse, who was up already, had heard the carriage drive in. She let him in and began to make the coffee.

Klaus sat down on the kitchen table and let his legs dangle. "I tell you I've had an experience!" he boasted. "It was wonderful, wonderful! You can't imagine what has happened to me!"

She was working at the hearth, setting things in order. "You owe that to me!" she said jovially. "Didn't I say you'd have a good time? It was a good thing you fell in with the idea — you're a quick fellow, that's sure! Who was it?"

"Oh, well, I can't tell you that, of course," he said, "but it was wonderful. I can tell you that much!"

She came over to the table with his cup of coffee. As she looked up at him, she gave a short laugh. "You don't need to tell me who it was!" she said; "you've got her mark on your eyebrow!" Then she said, in a low, reproachful tone: "So that's the kind you are, is it? And you're still so young!"

Klaus defended himself. "It really wasn't anything bad, Suse, truly it wasn't. I was just awkward, that's all. She was nice again afterward."

She stood still awhile, looking at him, and thinking. "I had an experience like that once — last winter, with the student. Oh, it was too beautiful!"

"Oh, unspeakably delicious!" he said again, "unspeakably delicious! Just think — so dear, and so beautiful!"

She stood near him while he drank his coffee. Looking out into the cloudy morning, she said thoughtfully, "When you think that a person has to be taught everything else, and has to pay a tiresome old fee, too, isn't it queer that you're expected to learn the most difficult and most important thing in the world without having a teacher or paying a fee? I'm fond of him, or else I wouldn't have done it; but still it would be a great deal better if we learned to know each other better first, if he kissed me secretly and furiously like the student. How that man did kiss me!"

She went back to the hearth and worked there for a few minutes. By and by she came back to the table with her coffee and bread. "But what will my father and mother say about that swollen eyebrow of yours, oh, you bitten hero?"

Klaus felt his eyebrow. He scolded at the crazy girl, and then he laughed. But in a minute he grew dubious. "Perhaps it would really be better, Suse," he said, "if I slipped off right away while it is still early."

She laughed. "That would be just the way it was five years ago," she said.

Klaus was annoyed. "I'd have liked so much to spend the day here," he said. "It sticks in my mind that Saturday I've got to put the soldier's uniform on; I'd have forgot it most easily here."

"I'd have liked to keep you," she said, "you can believe that. And my sweetheart likes you, too; he's coming back about the middle of the morning."

It seemed to Klaus, however, that he could withdraw

with some dignity if he went now. He ran up to the attic room, packed his bag, and said good-by hastily. Standing in the broad, sandy road, he threw one long look toward the comfortable farm-house where the hot-tempered girl was asleep. He had left the last houses of the village behind him before day had fully come.

Then next evening he went to the artist's to see whether she had come back from her summer trip. He found her at home, and had supper with her. When she expressed surprise at his cheerfulness and assurance, he said that being at home again and seeing the people there had done him a great deal of good. After a while he said, "Say, Aunt Laura, when a person falls in love happily, that must be magnificent. It's a pity that you never knew anything about it."

She stared at him with her mouth open. "You little fool," she said; "how do you know that I never knew anything about it? I? Why, you stupid youngster, I've heard the angels in heaven sing!"

He stared at her. "Oh, Aunt Laura," he said, in real joy, "how glad I am!"

"Well!" she said, "isn't that kind of you! And now I know why you're in such good spirits! Seeing the people at home did you so much good!"

He blushed, and laughed.

But as he was walking home, it depressed him to think that apparently it was possible for even a person who had had such a beautiful experience and had passed such unspeakably happy hours, to become as quiet, as sad, as lonely as Aunt Laura was; and this discovery made him cherish his own beautiful experience more silently in his soul. Now and then, however, its soft, fine voice sounded out louder than the sharp harsh word of command at the barracks.



## CHAPTER XIII

KLAUS entered the barracks on Zeise Strasse with a good sound physique. He had in his bearing that audacity peculiar to the Baases. His body, though rather flabby at first, soon grew harder. Both the corporal and the lieutenant liked the skilful, ready young man very well indeed.

But when the first drill was over, and the service had become somewhat easier, the corporal noticed that the neat young merchant held aloof a little, that he had several books in his chest, and that the lieutenant sometimes gave him a pleasant nod. That irritated him; he was an unusually small-souled person, and consequently was forced to make friends with the stupid fellows. Now, whenever the room had to be cleaned, he put Klaus Baas at the dirtiest corner; and after drill, when everybody was sitting on his chair, leaning back against his chest, reading or sleeping, if he saw Klaus reading a book, he would attack him roughly: "You feel like a millionaire already, eh? You've got to serve for two years, just like everybody else. I'll show you, do you understand?" And then he would give him some task to do that was always unpleasant, often insulting, sometimes altogether senseless; and with it all he was cunning enough not to go too far, so that he could always defend himself to the lieutenant, if Klaus Baas should complain. So the months passed, almost unendurably. Klaus was a good shot; he kept the books for the marksmanship officer, and as he stood well with him and the lieutenant, he hoped to be made exempt, in spite of the corporal's hostility.

By and by the manœuvres came. Klaus enjoyed them very much. They marched through many a Holstein and

Mecklenburg village, sometimes in high spirits, sometimes worn out, now wet, now dusty; sometimes they went about in masses, sometimes in secret night patrols. Several times Klaus was told off to lead a patrol; he penetrated far ahead without being discovered, made a clear report of what he had seen, and felt surer than ever now that he would be made exempt.

Fate, however, did not mean him to reach that rank by military deeds alone. On the last day of the manoeuvres he was quartered in a Lauenburg village, at the house of a sickly little cotter, somewhat off the road to the village. It happened that the only cow on the common was going to have a calf there. As there was no time to waste, the cotter woke the soldier, dead tired though he was, and begged him to help. Klaus got up immediately, and taking a lantern, some salt, a cloth, and a wisp of straw, went out into the black rainy night and stood by to help. The night patrol, noticing the light on the lonely common, came up to see what it meant, the first lieutenant himself in the lead. They found the soldier bending over the calf, rubbing it off with wisps of straw, the sweat running down his face. The little cotter, afraid his soldier might get into trouble, praised Klaus's skill. But the first lieutenant praised it too. "We need people that aren't afraid to act and that are handy at all sorts of things. You will be made exempt."

So Klaus went more cheerfully back to the barracks. But then the indoor work began. The whole day he had to brush trousers, count and pack them, and look after the buttons. A violent longing for freedom came over him; he longed for books, for a chance to throw himself earnestly into his work.

It tormented him to think that he would have to spend a second year in this way, when those of the men who had been able to get a better education than his would be free to go wherever they chose. He looked around carefully for some way of changing the situation.

One Sunday, when he was going to his mother's, he met a corporal from the district headquarters whom he

had often met before. The man came up to him and told him that years before, when he was a mere youngster, he and Klaus's father had worked for the same company at tearing down old houses, and that Jan Baas had protected him several times from rough usage by the other workmen. He was glad to know the son of the man that had been so kind to him.

Klaus Baas puckered his forehead, and did some quick thinking. "If my father did something for you once," he said, "perhaps you can do something for me now." He told him what bad terms he was on with his corporal. The man agreed at once to see what he could do. Several weeks later, he managed to get Klaus transferred to the office at the district headquarters, using his good handwriting as a pretext.

Klaus's captain, who would have been glad to have this sturdy, skilful soldier at the front, was very much annoyed when he found that he was going to lose him. Without waiting to investigate, he said that Klaus had drawn up a petition and sent it in without informing him. He shouted out across the yard to ask whether Baas hadn't got into some trouble or other, so that he could lock him up for a week. "At your orders," Klaus Baas said, adding that he had not sent in any petition. The captain cried that he was glad Klaus had said that; he would look into the case and find out, and lock him up for a month in the meantime. After that, however, he took no further interest in the affair; he was a weak man, who did a great deal of loud talking to keep people from finding it out.

So now Klaus worked in the bare office at headquarters on Smissen Allee. Deftly he wrote out furloughs, requests to be sent back, and lists of reserves. He and the sergeant major, a sensible family man, talked about all sorts of things—the cost of meat, social democracy, going to church, bringing up children. As Klaus was free now in the afternoons, he determined to put his liberty to some good use. He bought English and Spanish grammars, and borrowed books in both those languages, as well as books about trade. He took his meals and slept at home.

He made up his mind to begin work at once. Sunday afternoon, as he was sitting in the sitting-room, taking his first look at his new books, and listening to Hanna, who was talking about her school, the door suddenly opened, and Kalli Dau walked in.

He had on a brand new suit, wore a glistening white, tight collar, and had just been shaved. He looked almost solemn. He shook hands with everybody, even the youngest children, and then sat down in the chair by the table. He had got in yesterday noon, he said, on the *Susanne* from Iquique, and had spent the night at Mother Kindt's on Hopfen Strasse. Flinging his cap on the table, and shoving aside the pile of books Hanna had lying there with an expression of contempt, he began to scold vigorously. "I've got to go to the School of Navigation! There's no other way out of it. When you get down to it, you can't stand going to sea before the mast all your life. But I tell you, I'd rather scrape rust off for nine years than go to that damned school for nine months!" Sticking four fingers down his neck, he tugged vigorously at his collar and gave the pile of books another shove.

Klaus Baas, very much surprised, was glad that Kalli had come to this conclusion.

"I've heard," he said, "that the teachers at the School go to work very cautiously with you fellows, Kalli; they handle you as if you were made of glass. If they didn't, you'd all lose your minds, because you aren't used to studying. I did hear once that a whole class, who had just come from sea, were so upset by having all their ideas turned upside down, that the teacher sent them up to the observatory; and up there, where you get a good look out around over the Elbe and the country, they recovered themselves and got their wits back again. I don't think you really need to be afraid, Kalli."

Kalli Dau didn't find much consolation in this story. "It isn't just the School," he said, still downcast; "there's more than that in it." With a great tug, he pulled out an old embroidered wallet, and spread out its contents — receipts for the new suit and for his shoes, and five hun-

dred marks in German banknotes. He counted them over three times with his big yellow, tarry hands, and then said, "I could live on that all right for nine months, but I couldn't pay the tuition and buy the damned books and maps. And if I don't go crazy doing it, I'll need a sextant when I get out." He put the receipts and the notes together again very particularly, and stowed them away so weightily that they did not know what to say. "Well, there isn't anything else to do, Klaus," he said; "I've got an old great-uncle, or something like that, in Blankenese. When I came home from Canada and left that German bark, he told me that he'd help me if I made up my mind to go to the School. I've got to go to the old man's, and I'm going to — you've got to come along."

Klaus Baas said good-by forthwith to his books, and reached for his sword and cap. Then he and Kalli went to Blankenese.

All through the trip Kalli Dau sat back glum in a corner; sometimes he stuck his fingers down his neck and jerked at the collar, to which he was not used. Once he said, "I never bothered myself about the old man again — he'll turn me right out, of course." Then he tried to study things out: "What relation am I to him, anyhow? My grandmother — his sister — did she have a brother — or was it a son? Oh, I don't know — the thing's all mixed up."

Klaus Baas stared at him, amused, curious to see how the thing would turn out. "You must be very polite, Kalli," he said.

Kalli Dau looked out of the window. "Do you think," he said contemptuously, "that I'm likely to go at him hammer and tongs, and say, 'Hay there, hello, old fellow, — how are you?'"

When a fine-looking woman got into their compartment, Kalli Dau pulled his legs in carefully out of her way.

"You've got politer, Kalli," Klaus Baas said in a low voice, "since you threw your sack at that old woman's feet, — do you remember?"

"Shut up!" said Kalli Dau, gloomily. "What did I

bring you along for? You set your wits to work and think up what we'd better do to keep the old man from turning us out." He grabbed at his neck again and struggled for breath. To relax his mind a little, he began to talk, rather more cautiously than in the streets around the Grossneumarkt in the old days, with the woman who had got in. Soon he was in the midst of explaining to her how incredibly stupid the cabin-boy on the *Susanna* was, and how the people in the Azores, men and women alike, all wore straw hats, something like southwesters. And then she told him how her first granddaughter was getting along at school.

Going down to the beach, they asked where the old man lived, and found the house. The walls of the little garden running up from the beach had just been whitewashed; so had the railing along the walk up to the house; so had the benches in front of it, and the trunks of the little fruit trees; and so had the little house itself. The thin little old man, who had just got everything so painfully white, was sitting on the white bench, the white pail of whitewash still in front of him and the brush in his hand, resting a little; he looked as if he might be going on to do himself next; his thin hair, that was blowing about in the fresh wind, was white to begin with.

They went up the walk. Kalli Dau made his speech, reached into his pocket, and spread out his five banknotes and the receipts.

The old man raised his somewhat stubborn, stupid face rather stiffly, and took a good look at Kalli Dau. Then he said, meditatively, "Go into the kitchen and ask my granddaughter if she'll take you. She does the house-keeping, and has all the trouble of it. She's Captain Dreyer's daughter, my dead daughter's husband; he's sailing off the Chinese coast now."

Kalli Dau stuffed his papers in again and went in the door, shaking his head. A rather delicate girl, thin like a Frisian, and yellow haired and freckled, was bustling about in the kitchen. She looked up, surprised to see the broad sailor and the tall soldier. Kalli Dau told her who

they were, and said, "You and I have met before — seven or eight years ago; your name is Mariechen. The old man out there has offered to let me live here for the nine months I'm at the School. But the work will all fall on you," he said.

She looked them both over again from head to foot; then she said, with the quiet security of possession, "It doesn't make any difference about the little bit of extra work. Go upstairs and take a look at the room in the attic; if it's good enough for you, you can eat and sleep here for all I care." She pointed up the stairs with a wave of the utensil she was scouring.

They obediently clattered up the narrow stairs to a tiny little room, which, of course, was whitewashed over and over. It was just big enough to hold a table, a chair, and a bed with a red cover.

Kalli Dau shut the door, sat down on the bed, and took a good look around the room. "Well, so this is where I'm to sit over a lot of books for the next nine months!" he said. "And when I get half crazy at it and go downstairs, that little Jimmy Fix will be in the kitchen, and the old man in the garden. My, but they're both thin! The food on the *Susanne* was bad enough, heaven knows; but here, I might just as well hang my stomach up on the line to dry! Did you notice the tea that was standing in front of the old man? You could see bottom through thirty fathoms of it." He took hold of the wobbly table and gave it a cautious shake. Then, hearing the girl coming up the stairs, he let go the table, tugged at his collar, and pulled in his feet.

"Is the room good enough?" she asked curtly.

He nodded. "Oh, never mind — it's quite good enough." Looking out the window, against which a fresh breeze was blowing, he said pleasantly, "I see you got some handkerchiefs out on the line — aren't you afraid old daddy will blow away from you? He looks awfully thin to me."

She leaned against the door, looking at him with a resentful air. "I don't think you ought to say 'old daddy';

you ought to say 'grandfather,' like me. That would be much better."

He nodded. "Oh, all right," he said.

"He's nice old man," she said. "If you fall in with his ways, he won't lay anything in your way."

"Have I got to fall in with your ways too?"

"As far as the housekeeping goes," she said.

"You tend to the housekeeping, do you?"

"Why, of course," she said; "who else would? I do all the work. Am I to wait supper till you get ready" to come down from Haupt Strasse?"

"Don't you forget what you said then," he cried; "what you said about supper—do you really have supper?"

She looked at him angrily. "Just you tend to getting along at the School, and I'll make you fat! And I've no more time to waste now."

Kalli Dau looked after her, stared around the room again, and said, more cheerfully, "Well, everything's gone well enough so far. But that way she has of looking down on you is pretty bad—the little worm."

When they went downstairs again, they found her in the hall, putting on her jacket. Klaus Baas helped her politely, and asked where she was going. To get a friend, she said, and then to Friedrich's to a dance; did they want to go along?

Of course they did.

They went up the hill to Haupt Strasse and through the inn to the dancing hall. At the entrance Kalli Dau met an acquaintance who had been studying at the School for several months; he asked him about one thing after another, frowning anxiously all the time. Klaus Baas danced with Mariechen, and sang Kalli's praises. "You must consider that he's been before the mast for seven years," he said, "and all these years he has been abroad, and never in a neat, proper house. You see, he has no father or mother."

She listened, looking around the hall. "Do you see that tall man over there?" she cried, bursting into a laugh. "That one with the dangling legs! He looks like a pair of hot tongs!"



Klaus Baas found the one she meant, recognized him, and called and waved to him. It was Heini Peters.

Heini Peters stopped and came sliding across the floor, coat tails flying, to his old acquaintance, whom he had not seen for a year. He introduced Fräulein Ella, his thin little partner, whose artfully curled hair stood out all around her head. While Fräulein Ella was talking rather superciliously with Mariechen, Heini Peters said, in a low tone, "I am glad to have you meet her. She's a charming girl! I spent two hours with her not long ago in the cemetery at Ohlsdorf, — hours of consecration, Baas! I never met any one before that had so real an understanding of the holiness and beauty of the place."

Klaus Baas had spent this last year among practical, efficient people; and besides, he had outgrown Heini Peters. So he asked, rather condescendingly, why Heini wasn't in England, where he had meant to go.

Heini Peters shrugged his shoulders and said, rather gloomily, in a lowered voice, "I was in Manchester for two months, Baas; but I don't know — whether I was homesick for the old gentleman — I mean my father — or whether it was his fault; he wrote for me to come home, if I didn't like it. You see, I am the only child, Baas. So I've given up going abroad; and besides, it would be absolutely impossible now for me to leave this charming creature. I'm in Ernst P. Haken's office now — it's only a modest little place. But you were always going to visit my old home, Baas — my father and mother would be glad to have you come some day."

Klaus Baas said, in a cool, dignified way, that he would be glad to come some day, but that first he had to serve this year, and then he wanted to go abroad at once.

Then Mariechen, in her gentle voice, put in that she hadn't come here to gossip; she wanted to dance once more and then go home to get supper. She took Klaus's arm; Heini Peters, with his Ella on his arm, flew past them, blissfully happy, his long, thin legs working like a whirlwind, and both sides of his long coat waving.

Then they went down to the beach again and had supper in the clean, pleasant little kitchen.

This day pleased Klaus Baas immensely ; he didn't get at the books he had borrowed right away. Any one who has ever gone around with a class of navigation students in Blankenese knows how pleasant it is to saunter with them up on Haupt Strasse or down along the beach, talking about girls and ships and foreign lands and stars.

When the day's work in the office was done, Klaus couldn't stand it at home with his books and his mother.

Sometimes he stood waiting at the Altona station, looking over toward the small iron gate, — the pillar of which always has a black spot on it, which comes from having shag pipes knocked out against it, — until the sailor lads burst out, emptying the ashes out of their pipes and filling them again. Talking and scolding, they came across the street, with their big charts and piles of books. Everybody knows how different classes are, how some slip along close to the walls, and cower in their rooms, and how others simply rule the town ; but never was there such a magnificent class as this before — from its members' point of view, of course. All of them had gone to sea on sailing vessels for five or six years and had met here and there ; three of them had been on the same ship for three years, first to South America, and then to East Africa ; and once, in the harbor of Iquique, where three German barks lay anchored in a row for three months, five out of the eleven in the class had got up a sort of singing club, and had sung so well that the whole harbor and city had kept still to hear them. They all wore blue suits, and pulled their soft sailor caps far down on their heads.

After they had got their work done, they lighted their pipes, left their rooms, and walked up and down Haupt Strasse or on the beach, talking about their work, about Taifun, Iquique, or Melbourne, about the customs of people at home and abroad, about captains and cabin-boys, the imperial marine, and the Yankee coast. They swaggered along, laughing and talking at the tops of their voices as if Haupt Strasse belonged to them. If it

was a particularly nice evening, — and the late autumn evenings never were more beautiful than in this year, — and if old Matties, who taught this class, had told them to come back in the evening to learn a few more stars, they never went near him, but stayed down on the beach all evening, and then next morning told him that in Blankenese it had been cloudy. They stayed together sometimes, sometimes went in groups, usually with several pretty Blankenese girls.

Klaus got into a regular habit of going to Blankenese as early and as often as he could. He leaped down the steps to the beach, and pulled Kalli Dau away from his distances and equations. Then they and the other students walked up and down Haupt Strasse or along the beach, even when a cutting east wind was blowing or when a cold wet mist lay over everything. When the group separated by and by, so that each student could talk with his sweetheart for a while, Klaus always took the delicate little Mariechen with him. After they had walked on for a while, he drew her to him and kissed her. Then, although he had made up his mind not to ask for anything more, and not to stir up any strife, he was always led on by her sweetness and by the charm of her red mouth, to ask for more. He pressed her hard. Seizing his good-for-nothing hands, she tried to hold them still, but it was of no use; he did not stop until she cried anxiously, "Oh, please don't do it any more! I can't, and I won't!" And then she began to cry. Then Klaus was sorry; he patted her, tried to quiet her, and blamed himself, and they went back to join the others.

Every Sunday evening they went out to dance. Kalli Dau did not know how to dance, but he learned. In his simple-minded way, he put his whole soul into it, and practised literally in the sweat of his brow. His worst trouble was that his left leg moved with a queer troublesome jerk, that always tore his partner's skirt. But they all advised him so well that finally he learned. The girls were adroit and charming, and the first violin played wonderfully. The slow open dances were coming in again; and

the dances at Friedrich's had never been carried on with such inspiration before, and they never will be again. Heini Peters came over every Sunday; he held up in his left hand his empty cigar-holder, ornamented with a great ivory elephant, and kept time with it.

The students kept themselves and their girls very much to themselves. They made Klaus Baas welcome, however, because he had come with Kalli Dau, and because he soon showed that he could understand them. Klaus enjoyed tremendously being with these cheerful young men, who were astute and experienced far beyond their years, and who looked around rather distrustfully at all they saw. It made Klaus prick up his ears, and in going around with them he got a good deal of sound knowledge of people. For weeks he let himself drift along comfortably in this way. Like the old philosophers who discussed the foundations of the world while they were walking up and down, Klaus was extending his knowledge of the world while he was strolling up and down Haupt Strasse or down on the beautiful sounding beach. And then one day he discovered that his money was gone. The daily trips in the train and the daily glass of beer had exhausted his scanty little purse.

He emptied it out on the kitchen table. Seeing that he still had fifteen groschen, and realizing that now he must either starve or be a burden on his mother, he sat for a while, looking meditatively at the little pile of silver in front of him. He walked up and down thinking, "What now! That's the end of Blankenese!" and like the wicked steward in the Bible, he cried out, "What shall I do?"

Suddenly something struck him. He raked the fifteen groschen into his hand, went straight off to the office of a big newspaper, and paid for an advertisement offering to attend to bookkeeping and to English and German correspondence for a merchant in the afternoons. As he went home again, he thought, "Well! if you are successful, you can't go so often to Blankenese, for one thing; and for another, you'll have some money when you do go; and in the third place, you'll have more work, which will

be very good for you ;” and he felt quite edified by his action.

Two days afterward he received several answers from the office. The one that pleased him best came from a varnish factory in Mühlen Strasse. Curious to see how it would turn out, Klaus went there at once.

It was an old Hamburg house, narrow, high, dark from smoke and dust, and yet it had a genuine individual charm. The door had a good, old-fashioned shape. When it opened, rattling and clattering, a bell hanging on a steel spring above it rang clear and high. To the right of the door was a broad, deep bay window, the principal window of the house; the window at the left was small and narrow. The door opened into the long narrow hall, which ran back to a window on the court. A thin, elderly little man sat at that window on a wooden stool, with old boots and pieces of leather around him, mending shoes. Klaus soon learned from the dealer's daughter that this cobbler had been one of her mother's suitors, and consequently a rival of her father when they were all young. But he had always been of a shy, effeminate nature and the other suitor had carried off the girl, without wasting words, while he had looked on quietly. His reverence for the woman, however, had lasted. After her marriage he had come with his miserable little cobbler's outfit to live in her house. He mended shoes for the neighborhood, and did the houseboy's work as well; he brought up from the station the casks of varnish coming from the factories, mixed and prepared the varnish, and delivered it to city customers on a Scotch wheelbarrow, or sent it off by mail. As the years had rolled along, his love had subsided, and finally died. The woman he loved, having grown too stout to move around easily alone, sat all day at the great bay window, embroidering and looking down at the busy street; and he sat at the little low window on the court, mending shoes. Several times a day she came to the steps at the door, to go through the house; then he got up to lead the clumsy woman around on his arm; and neither of them seemed to see the other.

At one side of the cobbler's bench was a moderately large room that held a desk and table, both covered with piles of accounts, receipts, and account-books. The rest of the floor was covered with varnish casks of all sizes. The proprietor of the shop, a squat elderly man, whose hair and beard were always in disorder, had burrowed around for years, growling at the confusion; sometimes he straightened out one thing or another, but almost everything lay there topsyturvy. As his business had grown, it had become more and more necessary for him to go out to see his customers, so that often he was not at the desk for days at a time. The disorder had kept growing greater, until at last it had got altogether beyond him. Then he left the room, banging the door behind him, and saying that it would make him crazy ever to go into that room again. Pale with irritation, he sat down with his newspaper—and saw Klaus Baas's advertisement.

So now Klaus Baas was standing at the desk. He shoved all the piles of papers off it, and set to work hunting and arranging, counting, recording. He worked with the zeal of people who cannot endure to look at disorder, and who forget where they are and what time it is getting to be in sorting out and rooting around as if they were possessed, until at last they see order around them. After a month's work Klaus could show the discontented little man that everything was in order. He showed him where to find everything, and explained the condition the business was in. And it was in very good condition. The little man made very sure of this, and was so delighted that he gave his young assistant in the blue uniform an extra gold piece. After he had talked to Klaus for several days, and had also made sure that a two-mark piece, left as if by chance near a pile of accounts, was found and handed in, he felt really liberated from great anxiety, and went out light-heartedly to visit his customers.

But now Klaus Baas was no longer alone in the room. After he had been working for a while, the shopkeeper's daughter came in to bring him some coffee. She brought along the novel she was reading, and said that she liked

this rear room better than the front one; and besides, it wasn't any fun to be with an old woman all the time. She was a pallid little old maidish person, who read one detective story after another; these stories of varied occurrences and vivid experiences supplied something that her own narrow little soul would always lack. But now she soon let the book drop into her thin lap and talked away about how afraid she had been at first of Klaus Baas; for having anything to do with young men was a pretty dangerous thing nowadays. But now that her father had told her how capable, industrious, and steady Klaus Baas was, she liked to keep him company for a while. Then she told him the story of her father and mother and the old shoemaker, and about their property and their friends, and about her only brother, who was managing a little enterprise of his own out in a suburb, and who never came home, because he wanted to marry a young girl living next door, a stupid young thing, who sometimes went past the window. When he finally cut short her weak, colorless talk, she said suddenly that she would be willing to confide everything to him, even the most secret feelings she had, and so he could be quite open with her. He looked down with quiet contempt on the poor, meagre-looking thing, thinking, "What sort of secrets could you have!" She was vexed at the hardness of this youth, who called her brother's sweetheart, when she went by the window, a pretty little thing, and nodded to her.

Gradually she saw clearly that there was no hope for her. And perhaps, anyway, her dislike for her brother's sweetheart was greater than the inclination of her withered old heart toward the handsome bookkeeper in the blue uniform. One day she declared in tears that she was sure that her brother's sweetheart was not true to him, and that the thought of it made her miserable. Herr Baas would really be doing her a great favor if he would try to make love to the wild little thing, just to try her.

The little girl had a pretty, agile figure, that made her look like a weasel running across the yard, and her eyes

were good and childlike. The task appealed to Klaus's vanity. His conscience demurred a little, but he appeased it by persuading himself that with all her shyness the little thing was probably a fickle enough little butterfly, since she looked so cordially in at him through the window; and besides, she could never be anything but unhappy with her lover, who was just as shaggy and grumpy as his father.

And so, at twilight, in spite of the damp cold winter weather, he opened the window when she was passing by, to exchange a friendly word with her. By the next day they were standing at the outer door, talking in simple-hearted, youthful fashion about her home village among the beech woods of Eastern Holstein, about her friends, and picnics and dances she had been to. Without saying a word about her relation to the son of the house, she talked along to Klaus in a wise, grandmotherly way. He did not care for it; and her looks weren't to his taste, either, for she was soft and dark. Nevertheless, he put himself out to win the shy little thing's confidence, and boasted to the bad old maid that he would have a kiss from her before the week was out.

When she came the next evening, he at once took advantage of the dreary, rainy mist to ask her for a kiss. He asked it, impelled simply by an overweening vanity, without a speck of real desire for it. "Just one!" he said, "Why, we're such good friends! You love me a little, don't you? Just one!"

She looked at him with her soft, dark eyes, and trusted him, — good-hearted little creature that she was. "Well, then, just one," she said, "and then never again!" And she stayed quiet in his arm.

In a second the withered old mischief was right beside them. Fairly choking with venom, she poured forth all her scorn and hate on the child. And she finally told her that Herr Baas had been in league with her.

As the little creature leaned there against the door, her big dark eyes looked as if they were gazing at snakes ready to strike. Casting one horrified look at Klaus, she



slipped silently away, looking exactly like a pretty little weasel.

After the thing was done, his wretched trifling with the trusting little girl's soul struck deep into Klaus's heart. He went home to his room with a deep conviction. "This can't go on! All this chasing around Blankenese, and now this last bit! What a shameless thing — to betray a little thing like that! And to do it out of nothing but overbearing arrogance!" No, it couldn't go on! He would work now, work like mad! — work till he saw and heard nothing but his work! And he certainly needed to work, for think how far behind he was. Did he want to have to expose himself to ridicule again, as he had done last year at the parsonage? Wouldn't he have to grind to catch up to those that had gone to the high schools? Ah! he had had another attack just like that he had had eight years before, except that that one had lasted two days, and this one eight weeks. And then his mother had boxed his ears, this time they had boxed themselves. "We'll just choke this life and these goings-on right here," he thought. "You're going to work, you clown. Where are the books? Oh, here you are!" He piled them on the floor in front of his bed, so that he couldn't help stumbling over them when he came in the next day. Then with set teeth, and with many a reproachful shake of the head, he went to bed.

And now began a period of strenuous study, attended by resolute zeal and puzzled speculation. If he didn't plunge head over heels in work, he was convinced that he would never know anything, that he would never get anywhere, and that he couldn't forget the women.

When he had finished work in the dismal room in Mühlen Strasse, he went back to the office and threw himself on the pile of books he had stowed away in his drawer, in spite of the sergeant's grumbling. With only a dry, scanty little supper, he sat there till late at night, reading commercial law, perusing a thick volume on England's trade and colonies, and studying languages.

He had very little gift for languages — a sad state for a

merchant. Although in his apprenticeship he had had daily opportunities to read and hear English all around him, he had picked up very little. Indeed, he doubted whether he could ever learn it; for he thought that he would have to learn by heart every single sentence and phrase, and learning by heart was hard for him. For hours at a time he walked back and forth, repeating to himself over and over again what he had been reading. And half in anger, half in fun, he assumed different voices as he recited, made strange gestures with his head and hands, and tried in every possible way to get the strange language really going right. He did the same thing with Spanish. When he had put a good deal of time on the languages, he sat up till late at night over the old yellow books — over all those works which because of their simplicity and beauty are handed down from generation to generation — Homer and Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe and Schiller. Klaus was reading them, not because his nature craved them, nor because they are wonderful presentations of truth and beauty, — he was too immature and restless to feel that, and moreover, rather inclined by nature to work out things for himself; he was reading them because he regarded them as things to be learned and known. And he brought to his task the understanding, the sturdy gravity of a young fellow anxious to extend his education. Among the yellow volumes were, unfortunately, included writers who didn't belong there at all, but who, on the other hand, deserved to be forgot. Nevertheless, since they were right there with the others, Klaus Baas studied them with the same intensity and zeal. Once in a while he read volumes of history and science, and occasionally some of the later poets, recommended to him by some one whose judgment he trusted. It was, in all, a varied, confused assortment. And he kept at it till midnight, when, tired to death by the long, silent day's work, he went to bed.

And now, when he was twenty-two, his nature really developed. All this confused reading may have helped, or the hard work he was doing, or the experiences he had

had ; or it may simply have been that the right time had come. For whatever reason, his nature took definite shape, showing a happy combination of the gayety and kindness of his father and the firmness and loyalty of his mother. And it was time that the stupor that had hung like a mist over his youth should be dissolved. When it passed, he seemed to see far more deeply into things, and to see life in far more varied colors. Up to this time he had observed men and things only as they came in his way ; now he began to investigate, searching out and following up everything with due amazement. The intense spirit that had been lying passive for almost two years began to grow clearer, and to work itself forward in great strides.

He had not really perceived the development of this Baas nature of his in the events of his past life ; it was simply there, developing of its own accord. But he was quietly amazed now as he surveyed first the little scrub he had been, then that thin, fanciful schoolboy, and that tall, saucy apprentice. Sceptically enough, he followed up every leap and turn in the career of this creature who had turned out so differently at different times. He regarded critically the place he held in the world, and thoughtfully estimated his chances. In short, instead of being simply a dull liver of his life, he became a critic of it.

Up to this time he had thought very little about his mother beyond realizing that she was there all the time, was sometimes in his way, and sometimes of use to him ; and that she was looking out for the whole establishment, and doing it well, too. But now, as he stood by the kitchen window watching her, he pondered about her life with the Baases, her sorrow for her dead, and her long, hard work every day. And seeing in a new way her early widowhood, the crooked lines of her back, and the gray hair around her temples, he, in spirit, took his stand beside her to help. His little brothers and sisters had hitherto concerned him very little ; they were his mother's lookout, he had reckoned, if he thought of them at all. Now he began to occupy himself regularly about how they

spent their time, what kind of characters they were developing, and what they were preparing to be. He perceived that Hanna, now in her second year at the seminary, was fast becoming a woman, and he covertly assured himself that she came straight home from school, that she looked calm and peaceful, and that her hair was smooth. The little Blankenese girl was always pulling at her locks and braids and saying, "My goodness, my hair!" Fritz was learning to be a locksmith, and was going at night to the trades school. Klaus questioned him closely about what times his lessons came, and what way he went back and forth. Then several times he waited opposite the building, and followed Fritz to make sure he went straight home. Little twelve-year-old Johann couldn't help noticing that his big brother had taken to supervising his studies, and giving him short directions. Little Lotte received only fatherly pats on the head. His mother, amazed at his decided, exacting manner and at his thoughtful voice, now answered his questions considerably, and sometimes consulted him about this or that.

When he recalled his experience in the office, he seemed to see the men and the work more clearly there, too. Many things that had at the time seemed to him strange or wrong, he now understood. He felt that he would like to have a part in a business like that again, directing his intelligence, discretion, and ambition not only toward his own daily work, but toward the interests of the whole concern, which he would forward by his energy and insight. He thought of looking around for a good position abroad, where he could see something new, study and work hard, and get on a little.

And thus this season of impartial observation, of grave reflection, of discreet misgiving, of calm judgment, and of self-improvement, was bringing him to manhood.

But he was not a gay, happy-go-lucky man. His eyes were too grave for two-and-twenty, and the lines of his mouth too tight. Now, when after a hard day's work he went to Blankenese, on a Sunday evening in late spring, and the pretty, slim girl walked a way with him, he was

considerate in his tenderness, and restrained his passion. But she didn't like that, either.

"You are so cold!" she said. "Before Easter you were much nicer."

He rebuked her grimly. "What do you want me to do, you little fool? If I take hold of you, you make a face as if I were going to eat you, and begin to cry."

Her head sank. They tried to talk about something else, but since they didn't dare to grow tender, their souls remained silent and cold.

"You're always so quiet, Baas; you're working yourself to death," said the corporal that worked beside him. "You ought to go to St. Pauli once in a while, man, and relax your heart and body. But maybe you think that's a sin?"

"No, I don't think it's a sin," said Klaus Baas, looking up from his work. "What are young people to do with the need that besets them? But I am not going there. I've heard a good deal and read a good deal about all that, and I'm not going to lay up in a few hours a disease that will last a lifetime. Besides, it's too dirty for me."

"Well, you're right, of course," said the corporal, "but what's a fellow to do? I couldn't stand it."

"It's certainly hard," said Klaus Baas, curtly, going resolutely on with his work.

There were, to be sure, hours and days at a time when the Baas in Klaus made him see himself in brilliant colors; he was not falling down in the mud, not he; and he was certainly as industrious as a man could be. He pictured to himself magnificently how he would go abroad and do big things there, and then come back and pick out the prettiest girl in the country for his wife. She would have a sort of swinging walk and unspeakably pure lovely eyes. All these speculations made him fairly drunk with happiness. But far oftener he was downcast, silent, and bitter. Often at supper time, when Hanna was busy around the hearth, and he was standing by the window, frowning at the old lamp, with its sorry, weak little light, he felt bitterly that his life was very like old Sara, dreary, smoky, weak, and uncertain.

## CHAPTER XIV

ONE wet September evening, shortly before he was dismissed from the service, Klaus was going home from a trip he had made to apply for a position. A little set up by the idea that the head of the big firm had received him and listened to him kindly, he was walking along in his vigorous, energetic way — exactly as his forefathers had walked in Heisterberg — through Wex Strasse, now alive with the usual evening throng. Suddenly he saw a plain, elderly woman carrying several parcels cross the street and slip on the muddy, slippery stones. Thinking, perhaps incorrectly, that she couldn't help being run over by a big wagon that was coming, Klaus made a dash for her. In doing so, he fell heavily himself, striking his head so hard against the curb that he lost consciousness. As he lay there in the mud with a crowd gathering round him, his brother Fritz, happening along from the shop, recognized him by his mole-colored hair. Kind arms carried him into the flat, where, after several hours, he came to. His head ached furiously, and he felt generally confused and sick.

The next day, when the sick spell had subsided, Hanna told him that Karl Eschen had been there to ask how he was. Klaus didn't quite understand her, but the sound of the name gave him an indistinct sense of pleasure, and he fell asleep again. Feeling as if a dull low sky were pressing down on his head, he dragged himself in his dreams along the wide stretches of his life. Sitting on the old church wall, all bent over because the sky was pressing so low on him, he thought that he was trying to talk to Liese Lachmann, but wasn't getting along very well. Then he was beside Lotte's bed, kneeling so low that he could

hardly see her face. And then this thing pressing down on him was squashing him into the muddy, yellow Elbe, while Peter Sööt looked on in silence. Then he seemed to be so small that he couldn't manage to push away the foot pretty little Tuddi and Sanna had planted on his neck in front of the hotel on the Neue Jungfernstieg. And when after all this he woke up, with his head a little clearer, his eyes carefully sought out the figures of his mother and the others, and followed every motion they made with a joy he had never felt before. To the helpless boy who had been aimlessly wandering around in the monstrous mazy land of dreams, these real people of his, with their loyalty and love, seemed unspeakably delicious.

In her anxiety not to be dependent upon her children in her old age, Antje Baas was out for every cent she could earn. To that end, she had rented a little room with one window, adjoining the bedroom, but opening only into the hall, and she planned to let it to some modest lodger. At first the business venture did not seem to promise well, and she would have been glad to give up the whole thing. The first lodger, a middle-aged man, had made eyes at the fine-looking woman with the neatly parted hair, and had been promptly sent off. The second was disposed of because he had too little linen and too irregular habits. A third paid his rent three days late. Next came a young chimney-sweep, a straight, stiff kind of fellow. In strange contrast to his dark calling, he brought with him a scrupulously clean little outfit—you might almost say, an exhibit. His linen was irreproachable. And his bureau was covered with all kinds of bright gimcracks and ornaments, which he kept shiny by most solicitous rubbing. A more beautiful shine than he gave was never seen on shaving outfit or ash tray; and never was clock or lamp more exquisitely polished. Since, in accordance with his precision and delight in shininess, he led a life of the utmost regularity and solidity, Antje Baas liked him. She was indeed so well satisfied that she did not allow herself to be shaken even when her youngest boy, whom she discovered at the chimney-sweep's keyhole,

excused himself by saying that all the time the chimney-sweep was polishing his chattels, he jumped around the room in the queerest kind of way, so that a fellow simply had to stay and watch him. The boy got a hard box on the ears, and the lodger remained in high favor. Antje Baas reasoned that what he did in his room was his own business, and that was what he rented the room for; she had no call to interfere with him, and she wanted no interference from any one else. But the next year the chimney-sweep fell in love with and married a girl—a servant somewhere on the Gänsemarkt. It could hardly have been otherwise, for she was the cleanest and tidiest serving-maid in Hamburg; and that is saying a great deal. Her black dress, white apron, and cap were unutterably clean. She seemed to use a soap that gave her cheeks a kind of high finish; and her eyes were certainly of polished glass, moved by some mechanical device. Hanna, who set a good deal of store by cleanliness herself, and who secretly liked the little man in spite of his jumps during the polishing process, could appreciate his choice. The only thing that surprised her was that he hadn't waited till he found one made of silver, set here and there with crystal.

After he left, Antje Baas got a small, dark-haired man who suited her exactly, and who lived in the little room for years, although his rent was not always forthcoming. He came from an old Schleswig family whose peculiarities had often spread excitement throughout the neighborhood, once, indeed, throughout the whole kingdom of Denmark. For instance, his grandfather, a teacher of some reputation, married a widow when he was rather getting along in years. Then, as is not unusual, he developed a great fondness for women—a fondness belated, certainly, but violent. So, when his wife began to fade, he cast his eyes toward her daughter by her first marriage, whom she had brought to his house. With the naïveté of the original Adam, he one day wrote a letter to the king, asking whether he might marry his stepdaughter; his wife, he said, viewed the idea favorably. He received an answer telling him he must leave the realm within three days. For a while he



lived abroad, but he finally returned to his home, an old man with smiling eyes. This man's grandson, Antje Baas's lodger, a silent, gentle fellow, was a servant and man of all work in his native village. Then it occurred to him that he would like to be a missionary in the service of the Lord. Two pious congregations on the Schleswig heath, for his sake and the sake of lost heathendom, raised enough money to provide him with a scanty education. Regularly ordained by the provost, and provided with parting blessings and ready money, he set off for India, where for several years he filled his position without offence. Then there was a change, the cause of which it is difficult to fix. It may be that his education was too superficial, or that it had been bungled. It may be that he had inherited too much of the old Adam from his grandfather. He may have been one of those people that do not really find themselves until they are past thirty. Or it may be that, weak and soft as he was, those dark people with the big soft gleaming eyes pleased him pretty well as they were. Whatever the reason, he began after several years to write very strange letters back home. He wrote that now, in the light of the Indian sun, he saw, far more clearly than he had ever seen before, the Christianity they had back there in Torupp and Haudebüll; and that he was perfectly convinced there was no real truth in it, either scripturally or humanly. Where in those villages was there a man who would let any one box his ears, as the Saviour clearly and expressly commanded? And where was the man that would give away his coat and then his cloak also, as he was just as clearly told to do? Or where was there a man, who, like Paul, was going to Hamburg to reform that Sodom by his preaching? And could any one there cure a single disease? Well, and even aside from all that, they were all envious, or arrogant, or unjust to each other, usually all of these things at once, and they weren't a speck better than the heathen he was supposed to be converting. The typical righteous man in Torupp, he wrote in another letter, imagines that by going to church a hundred times and saying a thousand prayers, and giving thirty marks

to missions, he has struck an agreement with the Almighty. So he lives along, comfortable in the belief that all the rest are going to hell fire, and looking condescendingly on the poor heathen, converted by means of his money. But, he wrote, all that was going to turn out very differently. All these digs at the congregation, and even at God himself, might after all have been endured, for they could have been regarded as exhortations to repentance, in which people will swallow a good deal. But at last he even descended to attacks on the provost, to whom, on account of his stout little figure, he referred in his letters with absolute disrespect as "Little Fatty." He wrote that the provost, so far from being an individual, actually managed to be German and Danish, have liberal and old church views, be pious and worldly, servant and lord, all at the same time. And he said that the provost's puffed-up air belonged a good deal more to a fool than to a minister of the gospel. Finally, in that same letter, he said that he thought that God and the world were much, much larger than they ever dreamed over there at home between Jübeck and Tondern. There they made God into a querulous, foxy compromiser. But he, over there in India, had seen the sparkle of God's eyes in the gleam of the Indian sun, and his dreaming love in the eyes of the heathen children. On the receipt of this dreadful letter a hasty despatch was sent, dismissing this black sheep from service in the kingdom of God. Since the money from home stopped too, he drifted about in one way or another from harbor to harbor, and finally got back to Hamburg—where he became a lodger in Antje Baas's room, and supported himself precariously by giving piano lessons to simple people. In addition to this, his nephew, a tall young craftsman from Kiel, who regarded him with pity and amazement, sometimes brought him food and a little money. He had certainly been getting deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the heathen he had once been sent out to conquer and civilize. For hours at a time he sat brooding over books with incredibly strange characters. And as he read, he propped his head, with its rather dishevelled black hair,

between his palms, and rubbed it violently, as if he were trying to press it into a shape that suited him better. At twilight he sat down in front of a queer little harmonium, and with strangely nimble movements, played odd rumbling moaning melodies, which conjured up for the hearer a picture of great hosts of people groaning dully in religious frenzy, wringing their hands, and imploring aid from a higher power. On general principles Antje Baas had nothing against his being a heathen, and nothing against his slow, melancholy tunes. But when her beloved boy grew restless in his dreams because of the playing in the next room, she wanted to turn the queer fellow out. The children, however, begged for him, and the sick boy himself persuaded her to let him stay. So Klaus, lying there, hearing the music faintly, was borne on the waves of slow strange melodies toward that far-away land before he knew that he himself would soon tread it.

A week later, when he was out of bed, Karl Eschen came a second time and stayed for about an hour. In his aristocratic way he looked all around the room, and studied Antje Baas and the children. And Klaus, pleased that every one of them was going about his duties tidily, thought to himself, "Go on — lift your eyebrows as much as you want to." Karl Eschen asked Klaus Baas how he had spent his time of service, and what he had read and done. He reproached him for having danced in Blankenese instead of trying to get into good society in Uhlenhorst. "I served my year in Potsdam," he said; "otherwise I might have helped you. Knowing all about social conventions is very important for a merchant, Baas; indeed, it's first and most important."

Although Karl concealed it cleverly enough, Klaus Baas saw that he had something up his sleeve and that he had wanted to inspect him and his people. Karl did not bring it forward that day. But the next day he came again, and asked whether Klaus Baas would like to go with him at once to the interior of India for three or four years, for the firm of A. W. Thauler. Karl told him about the firm, an important one, about the climate, and about life in India.

Secretly jubilant, Klaus Baas said at once that he would go. Several days later, still a little dizzy, but with a clear head, he went to the office of the Thauler firm. Here he learned that he would be in the employment of A. W. Thauler for only the first two years. After that, commissioned by and accountable to the firm of H. C. Eschen, of which Karl's brother was the head, Klaus was to accompany Karl into the interior to examine a tin mine there and perhaps get it working. The Eschens' father had come into possession of the mine ten years ago, shortly before his death, through accepting it as security. They were to start in two weeks. Klaus Baas considered, signed the contract, and was advanced a generous sum of ready money. Within the next few days he proudly made the necessary purchases, to the great interest of his brothers and sisters. His mother looked on critically and very silently.

On the third day before they left came an invitation from Karl Eschen's mother, asking him to be present at a little farewell party she was giving.

Klaus set off while it was still light, in a mood of almost solemn importance. It was the first time he had ever entered an aristocratic, well-to-do house. In the *Mittelweg*, which was still a quiet street at that time, he found the broad low house, in the first floor of which lived the Eschens. He went up the steps, and a neat maid let him into the hall. Klaus was surprised that the long narrow room was furnished in such a simple, old-fashioned way. Then he found himself in a cheerfully lighted room, where he looked cautiously around him at the dark walls, the heavy old furniture, the dark shining oil paintings, and the odd thick rug. Everything seemed to him to be very simple and yet very distinguished. After he had been standing there a little while a stately lady with shiny gray hair came in. She looked at him kindly, and giving him her hand, made him sit down. Then she sat down too, and said, with a sort of reserved cordiality, that she was glad he was going away with her son. She had heard his name now and then years ago, she said, when he had gone into

the office. Indeed, there at home they had all had a little joke about his name, because it had such a peculiar sound — Klaas Hinrich Baas. She looked at him again, with her wise gray eyes. Evidently liking his proud grave face, she went on, in the same reserved manner, "I asked you to come earlier than the rest because I wanted to have a word alone with you. I have had a great deal of sorrow in my family. I lost my father-in-law and my two brothers-in-law, and then five years ago I lost my husband. I have hardly put off mourning," running her hand down her black gown, "during the whole of my married life. Just once I spent three gay weeks with my husband, on a trip to Italy. My husband, who was in France in '70, was severely wounded there, and was never entirely well again; indeed he died, though not till several years later, from the consequences of that wound. As he grew worse the business declined, and when he died, five years ago, it suffered a heavy shock. Since that time, as you know, my eldest son Arthur has had charge of it. Now Karl is going to India. Within the last ten years, not much good has come to me from there. I want to ask you to be a good comrade to my son!" She tried to say more; but her eyes were overflowing, and she gave him her hand in silence. Pressing it, Klaus told her that she could rely on him.

Since other guests were coming, she excused herself and turned away. As he stood looking after her, he heard a woman's step behind him, and, turning, saw a tall, handsome girl, whose little head was covered with curly light brown hair. In a flash he recognized the Tuddi, who, in the red mantle and big chair, had sat for Zephaniah in the artist's studio. With a cool nod, she said haughtily, and at the same time casually, with a gesture designed to put him in his place, "Sanna and I knew right away who you were when Karl told about your being an apprentice at Herr Trimborn's. We remembered that Aunt Laura had told us your full name. But we thought that it would be better for you if we didn't say anything about it. And now to think you are going to India with my brother!"

While she had been talking, Klaus had rapidly recovered from his astonishment. "Do just as you like," he said, with an air just as haughty and just as casual as hers. "How is your sister?"

Seeing how quick and proud he was, she looked at him more benignly,— just as she had looked in the early years. "Sanna went on an excursion with her school out to the Lüneburger heath. She's been walking around all day, and she will have to go to bed as soon as she comes back." With a little laugh, she added, "But she was very curious to see you."

Just then her brother Karl came along and shook hands with him cordially, as with an old acquaintance who was going to be his daily companion for years to come. And yet the greeting was, as usual, formal enough. Then came the elder brother, Arthur, the head of the firm. He was like Karl, but smaller and thinner. He talked reservedly about the trip and about the outfit they ought to have, and about the firm they were going to be employed by first. Then he spoke of their own enterprise. Pretty soon an older man came up to them. He was short, thin, and refined looking, and wore spectacles, through which looked his childlike, intelligent eyes; altogether, he looked like a scholar. He was greeted by the older brother with a hearty slap on the shoulder as Uncle Eberhard, and presented to Klaus Baas in the same way. "Indeed, he hasn't any other name; the other one has absolutely disappeared. He is just Uncle Eberhard. And, Uncle, this is Herr Klaus Baas, who is going to India with Karl to look after that famous tin mine of ours." The little gentleman looked up at Klaus kindly, then, drawing back a little, stood there, a modest listener.

In a somewhat casual, trifling way, the older brother began to ask about the Trimborn business. Klaus Baas, on his guard, made clear and cautious replies, realizing very well that his tact and discretion were being tested. The little man in the background studied Klaus's face, and Karl looked now at him, now at Arthur Eschen. "Go on with your questions," thought Klaus to himself,

prompted by his crafty, comfortable peasant streak. "If you are coffeesacks, I'm a cornsack from away back!" And he had to be careful not to show in his face his pride in his sense of victory.

When the two brothers were called away to receive a new guest, little Uncle Eberhard asked Klaus to sit down on the sofa with him, and proceeded to ask him about the country he had been born in, recalling something of its history, and asking about certain historical associations. Trude Eschen came up to them again with a young man whom she introduced as "our friend," who was going away also to Mexico. She seemed to be in higher spirits now that this Mexican was there. "I just wanted to hear," she said, with a hearty laugh, "how Uncle Eberhard will manage to bring the talk around to seals and coins. Of course you know he's a collector of them—and I wanted especially to see what he would find to say about them to you."

"Why shouldn't he talk to me about them?" said Klaus Baas, lightly. "We have some good old families in my home country." He went on to tell about the Baas coat of arms, which was in the window of the museum at home, and about the valuable old estate they had lost through bad harvests and bad management.

Growing distinctly animated, the little gentleman questioned Klaus about this point and that. "Yes, that's just the way when you get to the third or fourth generation," he said. "There was my grandfather, who seized the oars himself when he wanted to go on board one of his ships in the harbor; and here I sit moping with spectacles and magnifying glasses over old seals and heraldic flourishes."

"And yet you're a Hamburger and a Republican," said the pretty curly-head, reproachfully.

Uncle Eberhard shrugged his shoulders helplessly and looked at Klaus Baas. He said that the Eschens had exactly the same origin as the Baases, except that their coat of arms ornamented the doorway of a farm on the other side of the Elbe, in the Kedingen region. Then Klaus Baas told again about the past and present life of the old families, about their remembrance of old times, and about

the country festival they had celebrated. Trude Eschen, with her head thrown back a little, kept looking at him steadily. Klaus felt that now she was respecting him again, just as she had the time he pressed her foot firmly down on the stool.

In his triumph, he grew a little too confident, and going up to a fourteen-year old cousin of the Eschens, grasped him cautiously enough by the shoulder, and said roguishly, "Well, do you know my name, and have you, too, had a lot of fun over it?" The expression on the boy's face and the way he shook off his hand showed Klaus that he did not understand his familiarity. Ill at ease again, Klaus said to himself ill-humoredly, "Positively, that's the last time I'll show these people what I really am." Stiffening up quickly, he asked, with a view to smoothing matters over, whether the boy, too, had heard the rumors about war. Back there in the '80's a fresh rumor of war spread over the country about every year. The boy answered that he had heard something about it on the playground, but that the teacher had said that it was just empty talk again.

Klaus returned to the front room, where he was introduced to some young people, between eighteen and twenty. In the confident, important way of their years, they were talking about their rowing, sailing, all kinds of ball games, and meetings in various places. Suddenly, in the midst of all this, two young ladies arrived quite unexpectedly. They were distant relatives, who had made the trip over from Bremen to say good-by to their "dear cousin," as they called him. There followed throughout the two rooms a lot of gay, surprised chattering, and running to and fro. Meanwhile Klaus Baas, standing silent and stiff among the gay crowd, felt bitterly annoyed because he couldn't strike the right tone, and be as free and easy as the rest were. He was sure that in their refined, supercilious way, they were remarking the "lack of breeding" in him at once.

Gradually most of the guests had gone into a room farther on, and Karl Eschen came to take Klaus in too.



It was a rather long, comfortable looking apartment well furnished with all kinds of old dark blue furnishings. Under the window against the exquisitely ruffled mull curtains was sitting an old woman. Though bent, she was still handsome; over her iron-gray hair she wore a snow-white cap, and she kept her hands folded in her lap. With some difficulty, she was looking up and answering in her soft voice the remarks addressed to her by the group around her chair. "That is my father's mother," said Karl Eschen. "Among her acquaintances she is still known by the old-fashioned title of Madame Eschen. She just loves to talk about old times, about the winter when the French were here, and the big fire, and all that; and she also talks very intelligently about what is going on around her now. But the whole period in between—even the death of her own people and the other changes time has brought—are entirely wiped out of her memory. She thinks her three sons are still living, and that our firm is still in its old flourishing state."

The group around her, young and old members of her family, addressed her with the greatest respect, some gravely and some brightly. And she gave to each a grave or a smiling answer. Karl Eschen, bringing Klaus up to her, said, "This is the man that's going to India with me, grandmother."

Probably understanding Karl to say that Klaus Baas came from India, she asked, with a polite inclination of her head, "Did you happen to come across my son, the sailor? His name is Felix, and he is a midshipman on the *Frauenlob*."

Klaus Baas bowed and said, "I have not seen him, Madame."

"Bon voyage," she said politely, with a dignified little bow.

Just then the maid came up and said, in a low voice, "I am afraid Madame Eschen ought not to talk any more." Then they went back to the other room.

After a little time, most of which he spent talking to Frau Eschen and Uncle Eberhard, Klaus made his farewells.

As Karl Eschen was accompanying him to the door, Klaus called his attention to the low crying of a child, coming from the other end of the hall. Listening for a minute, Karl Eschen smiled and said, "That's my little sister. Come on and make her acquaintance right now," he added cordially. "She's a pretty little girl, and I'm sorry I've got to do without her for such a long time."

Klaus followed him to a little room containing two beds. The child, who must have been about ten, was sitting up in one of the beds, rubbing her eyes and crying. The maid was standing beside the bed, urging her to get up. "Sanna always likes to sleep alone here in the guest room," she said to Karl Eschen; "but now she will really have to leave it, for the young ladies from Bremen have to sleep here."

Klaus Baas looked curiously at the pretty little girl, with her light brown braids, as she sat there in the big white bed. "You like to have a room to yourself, don't you, you rogue?" he said.

Still rubbing her eyes, she heard the stranger's voice, and said, "My family doesn't have a bit of respect for me."

Her brother smiled at Klaus Baas, "Come on," he said, "I'll carry you over."

But she only wept on. "I won't have anything to do with my family."

"Well," said her brother, "you certainly have got to get out of that bed. If you don't want to have anything to do with your family, I guess Herr Baas will have to do it. You know he's the one that's going to India with me."

Raising her head, the little thing looked at Klaus Baas with big grave eyes exactly like her mother's. Then, resignedly, she said, "Well, go on, then."

"Here we go," said Klaus Baas, quite as well satisfied as she. With the dexterity his experience as big brother had given him, he lifted the slender little figure, warm from the bed, and carried her to a nice little bed beside her mother's in the next room, sympathizing hypocritically

with her all the time. He laid her down and she snuggled wearily under the covers, but Klaus wouldn't let it stop there. "If they ever do anything to you again," he said, in a low, teasing voice, "then, Jumbo, show the gentlemen your teeth!" Opening her eyes again, she said: "My goodness, what rubbish! It's old Klaas Hinrich Baas." Klaus turned away with a smile.

Looking up, he saw Frau Eschen and Tuddi standing with Karl at the door. The two were laughingly reproaching their mother. "That youngest of yours is a spoiled one!" they were saying. "What will she be when she grows up? Her family has no respect for her, she says."

The mother smiled. "She's been brought up just the way you were," she said, "and aren't your manners and principles good enough? To be sure, you are all a little crackbrained — but one can stand that. However, if you want to be different, do just as you like."

They laughed, and went to the door with Klaus Baas.

The next morning, on his way to the office at headquarters to take leave of the sergeant, he heard very positive rumors that the war was really near. Hurrying faster, he eagerly asked the sergeant whether he knew anything about it. With a calm look at Klaus, the sergeant said, "I don't know a thing about it. If it's coming, it will come, that's all."

"Well," said Klaus Baas, hotly, "it isn't quite so simple as that. In the first place, how could I get out of the office? Do you think I want to be sitting there writing, while the rest are going to the field? And in the second place, I'm booked to sail for India to-morrow evening on the *Borussia*."

The sergeant, having no answer to make to that, let Klaus go.

On the steps leading to A. W. Thauler's, he met Karl Eschen, who had also heard of the probability of war. They spoke of it to the chief, who shrugged his shoulders and said that of course they would have to sail. Klaus and Karl were both perplexed and vexed, picturing to

themselves how disgraceful it would be if their ship were captured and they were taken prisoners, while the rest were going to the field. They waited till the very last moment before clattering down to the dock with their trunks. And by that time the rumors of war were getting fainter. In the twilight they were gliding down the channel.

Faithfully, mile after mile, the sturdy little boat pushed and pounded its way through the waters toward the south. Close by them glided the austere cliffs of Dover, and farther away the islands of the coast of France. On the choppy waves of the Bay of Biscay the sun shone warm. Off the rock of Gibraltar it grew hotter; and from the Suez Canal the desert in the light of the setting sun gleamed red as fire.

## CHAPTER XV

YEARS afterward, when Klaus Baas had passed by those shores again, and had spent years in the far East, the four years spent in the heat of India seemed to him, as he looked back upon them, like a single hot summer day and night. And they seemed so in spite of the many busy hours of commonplace work in the white office on Beach Street, not a hundred feet from the shore, and in spite of the constant tedious haggling with old Swee Hong. Vividly he recalled strangely beautiful and sometimes terrible images which flamed up like lights one after another and then faded. His family had probably lived for centuries in that same little village beyond the North Sea. He was the first of a long line to move away from the home place. And so the lands abroad were to him stranger, more wonderful, than they would have been to many others. Sometimes, indeed, they were almost terrible.

The Indian Ocean sweeps in a rolling deep blue expanse far out to the clear horizon. There the hot burning sun sets swiftly, almost as if it were falling down the sky into the darker, more strongly rolling waters. The moon shines white and the dark night sky gleams with a strange confusion of stars. The water at the prow gleams in many colors, like those of jewels from far countries. Klaus, as he looked out into the night and down into the water, felt that he was going among more passionate lands and men than he had known. He drew a deep breath and turned toward his fellow-travellers into distant lands. He talked with the stately wife of a captain, who was going to visit her husband in Vladivostock. She was a native of Ham-

burg, a self-possessed person, with a gay little laugh. "Are you homesick?" she asked Klaus. "Oh, no," he answered. He attached himself to her and listened to her talk about her children, whom she had left in her mother's care at Övelgönne; and as they talked he felt quite cheerful and comfortable. Sometimes, too, he talked to the bride-to-be of the English postmaster in Hong Kong, who sat under the awning sewing at her trousseau. She was younger than Klaus, and, happy because she was going to her sweetheart, she hummed at her work. Sometimes he stood at the railing with the Siamese officer who came from the French army, and talked about the method of attack of the German infantry. Sometimes he listened to the stories of the tobacco planter who was returning from a visit to Holland, his native country. Klaus resented the big, easy way in which he advised him to break his contract and become a tobacco planter in Sumatra. Sometimes, too, Klaus sat down with the shipping clerk who was travelling for a German firm to Yokohama and who was usually to be found sitting on the bench near the rudder, singing out sentences from a Japanese text-book over the water bubbling around the keel, or studying his Malay dictionary. Toward evening there was a game of skat with the captain and the tobacco planter, who lost, and had to pay for the wine at dinner. At that time only small steamers travelled between Hamburg and the far East. There were not ten passengers on board, but since no one of them had known any of the others, and since they all got acquainted, there was plenty of talking and listening.

Colombo gleamed through the night. The stars sparkled brightly over the deep blue sea. Black on the shore rose the gigantic forest. The white houses shone in the distance. But they were not so white as the breakers over the mole; and brighter than the stars gleamed the signals exchanged by the English men-of-war. Klaus Baas, standing against the wall of the chart-room, looked across and thought, "For centuries the people of my race have voyaged here in the service of England and Holland. Perhaps, four centuries ago, who knows? — a man from

my village may have seen this same picture. But they travelled on wretched little ships, and they were menaced by pirates, attacked by sickness, or struck down when they went ashore; many never returned. How safely and comfortably I am journeying!" The first mate, standing with his hands buried deep in the pockets of his white jacket, looked over toward the city and said feelingly, "Four years ago a young chap went ashore here. He and I had many a chat together. He was from a good family in Berlin. I rather think he wanted to come here to Colombo because he had heard some talk about the gay life here and the pretty dark girls. He lies buried here now. Do you see over there—that group of darker houses? That's the graveyard of the Europeans." The mate walked away whistling. "What was he telling you?" Karl Eschen asked Klaus. "Oh, about a young fellow from Berlin who went to pieces here and died." "Well," said Karl, "that happens over and over again, Baas. We've got to be prepared for anything." They both stood there silently, looking over toward the white city.

They swept on and on, nearer to the East every day. One brilliantly clear morning, on the seventh day after they passed Colombo, they sighted the Malay peninsula. At first it was only a strip of mist far out on the ocean; then, trembling and floating in the moist sunlight, appeared thickly wooded hills, with bigger hills behind them and mysterious forests through a blue mist. Over this country the sun glows and broods all the year round, and the ground is moist and fertile. Everywhere in wild luxuriance rise trees with grasses and vines growing thickly between them, making a dense growth reaching clear up to their tops. Wild things slip or crash through it, flitting and humming through the huge dank network. In this country man plays a very small part as yet. He dwells modestly along the shore; and here and there he has blazed a narrow trail in the wooded valley. As the steamer rounded a big curve into the bay, on the right several white houses were visible on the foremost heights.

Finally, along the coast, could be seen a white city, almost concealed behind tall trees.

They shook hands with their fellow-travellers and went down the gangway. The blades struck into the light blue water and they went ashore into a strange land.

Huge brown men, almost naked, in the shafts of light little two-wheeled carts, plunged forward. Imposing bright yellow men, in yellow khaki uniforms, placed their hands on their red turbans in greeting. Big, brown, bare-footed policemen in blue uniforms, with their little caps aslant, energetically cleared a way. A young man of Klaus's firm called him by name, shook hands with him, and led him to the chief's pony cart. A broad, handsome street led on under monstrous trees. On the right rolled the ocean; on the left, close one upon another, were the stone buildings of English firms. Two elderly, dumpy little Chinamen in broad jackets and wide blue pantaloons were walking along, their leather sandals clattering clumsily on the sidewalk. A gayly colored little crowd was approaching. In the midst was a rude coffin draped with a white cloth fluttering in the sea breeze. Behind it followed dark brown men singing and laughing, with wreaths of white carnations over their shoulders sending a pungent odor along the street. A short brown woman in her bare feet was standing at the door of a tavern, beside her fat husband. The wall above them bore a Dutch name. There at last was the imposing house of Klaus's firm, with the open shop below and the offices above, and the quarters for the employees beside it. Two big Chinese boys in wide blue jackets and short flapping trousers were in the courtyard at the side, killing a hen. They were letting the wounded creature flutter on the ground, and laughing with a heartless look on their pointed yellow faces. They were called, and came running up. "This boy belongs to you, Herr Baas," Klaus was told. Klaus tried to look at him masterfully. Silently, wondering if he were not dreaming, he followed them upstairs to his room.

In the morning the office was full of fresh sea air blowing



in through the open windows. Seeing the polished desk of Chinese workmanship, — which might just as well have been in an office on the Alster, — and the letter-paper bearing the name of the Hamburg firm, a man could imagine for a moment that he was at home. But when he raised his eyes the illusion would be gone. For, sitting against the wall, bent over their writing, were yellow Mongolians with shiny black hair done in long, coal-black pigtails, with handsome blue bows at the end. In front of the chief was a comfortable looking old Chinaman in a wide yellow jacket, sitting stockily there with his legs far apart. Now and then he pulled his wide pantaloons up above his knees, crossed his legs, and pulling out his memorandum, read it with many contortions of hands and face. The old fellow was a great dealer in the place, having at his command everything that the country produced — rice, tin, skins, pepper, copra, and nutmegs. Klaus Baas paused with his pen poised to see if he could understand a Malay word here and there. As a naked brown Hindu office boy passed with lagging step, Klaus asked him what was the name of the next steamer and when it was due. The Hindu seemed to have understood, for he stood still, looking at Klaus Baas with his soft, cow-like eyes; but Klaus couldn't understand his answer.

Work was over at five. The sun was still hot, and there was no shade on the grass yet; but the young bodies that had been sitting steadily for seven hours felt the need of exercise on the green grass. The rackets flourished in cheerful hands, the balls flew through the clear air. The players ran and scolded and, becoming foolhardy, sent the boys far off into the thicket for the balls. It was the first time Klaus had played since he had romped around the church in the village when he was twelve years old. At first he was pretty awkward, but he learned quickly, and was soon laughing at his partner's praise of him. "What are you laughing at, Baas?" his partner asked. "Oh," said Klaus, "I was just wishing that my mother could see me!" "Why, does your mother like tennis?" At that Klaus laughed long and merrily.

After the game and a bath came the nicest part of the day — the pleasant supper and the sitting together far into the night. The little hall was white, had rather high ceilings, and opened toward the front garden. In the middle of it stood a long table beautifully decorated with flowers. There they sat and ate, each with his boy standing attentively behind him. The punkah hanging from the roof supplied a current of fresh air, and made a monotonous accompaniment to their conversation as it slid along the bar. The men were all of good family and could talk about houses and gardens, horses and boats, balls and travels. They soon found out that Klaus Baas could not talk about such things, but he was friendly and simple, and had something that they all lacked — a hereditary seriousness which was always evident in his eyes, even when he was laughing with them, and the peasant's almost crafty self-reliance, which showed in a hundred small ways. They were thoroughly friendly with him. India was, to be sure, a new world to Klaus, but so were the companions with whom he sat at table. And it so happened that here in a strange land, with companions whose way of life was like his in every particular from morning until evening, Klaus became for the first time one of the class to which he now belonged. Wide awake and curious, he listened and learned all evening long.

And when as they joked and laughed, told their stories and spun their yarns, it suddenly grew dark, they got up and threw themselves into the lounging chairs around the open door. The lights on the wall behind them were lighted. On the white walls appeared white lizards, as long as your finger. With a sharp smacking sound they hunted down the flies, or dropped down with a thud. Huge moths whirred above them, beating heavily against the lights and the walls. Outside in the garden the bullfrogs croaked boldly, and from the distance sounded the resonant chirping of numberless crickets. On the street near by the sheiks going to watch sang a duet in low monotonous voices. An ox-wagon on wooden wheels, with a lantern stuck on, jolted softly by. In from the

door the moonlight shone white upon the faces and surrounded the forms in the chairs, the soda-water bottles upon the table and the blue-clad boys at the door, with a pale and ghostly glow. The talk went more slowly. A certain reserve came upon them; the thoughts of each left commonplace things of the present and went roving dreamily into the distance.

One of them told a story about his great-grandfather, who had been a weaver in Saxony — or perhaps a fisherman in Föhr. Another spoke of his father — what a time he had had with *his* father trying to enlarge and extend the business. Another talked about his mother — of the race and house she had come from and what kind of youth she had had. A fourth showed a picture of his sister, which he studied long and silently, as if he were looking at it for the first time. And while they praised it, he listened proudly. Klaus Baas kept quiet and listened, once in a while asking a cautious question in a pause, artfully, in order not to stop the narrator. In the midst of talk of this kind, one or another of the men would get up once in a while, walk over to the edge of the veranda, and stand there motionless, looking out into the night and thinking of home. Finally even the fellow from Oldenburg would get up. He was a large, well-built man, with light hair and eyes at once courageous and gentle. He was a general favorite. He stood longest on the edge of the veranda; then, suddenly, as if starting out of deep thought, he turned around, seized his glass, and emptied it, his handsome eyes full of gloomy fire. The Dutch physician had told him that he ought to drink less whiskey in his soda-water, but he said that drink was hereditary in his family and he couldn't leave off. For that reason he was a grief and anxiety to all of them. Finally they all said good night and separated.

As he fell asleep Klaus Baas wondered why he took so keen an interest in the fortunes of men and why he liked to think about them and to imagine things about them. He wrinkled his brow, remembering the fancies that used to beset him as he travelled on the barge up and down the

Elbe. And once again he thought that he certainly had not been born to be a merchant, but to be a writer or a journalist or something else equally unsubstantial. But then again it seemed to him that what he had was just an impulse to know the world and human life. And he laughed in a pleased way at his own anxiety, gave another glance at the variegated pictures he had made, and sailed on them as on a bravely painted ship with colors all flying, into the land of dreams. In the morning, his sense of duty and his delight in shrewd thinking and in conquest made a merchant of him again.

He had a good deal of trouble with the new language. He simply could not succeed in getting up enough skill in it to carry on a satisfactory chat with the native dealers. He could get no further than the general business formulas. The men told him that this language sense didn't go with a thick peasant's head like his, and advised him to do as the rest had done and try the "sleeping dictionary." The little Japanese women in Small Street, they said, spoke the Malay tongue well, and were not, either in their way of living or in their race feeling, common women. As for anything further, he might, of course, do as he liked; but for their part, they did not mean, settled as they were in the midst of work, a foreign land, and death, to become thoroughgoing ascetics. So one evening Klaus started off toward Small Street with the oldest of the round table. They came among naked children at play, and shining Kling women whose gleaming skins shone in the flickering lamplight by which the Chinese craftsmen sat at work in their open booths. Beside a pretty house covered with waving palms, in a tidy little room, about as big as the niche for the bed would have been in Klaus's home village, he found a dark little Japanese woman who hardly reached to his breast. Klaus was polite to her in an embarrassed sort of way. Then suddenly—because he had to—he found himself able to talk a little Malay. Losing his awkwardness, he soon felt quite at home. He looked with surprised delight on the pretty, friendly little woman, and stayed for at least five hours. He went home as light-

hearted and happy as if he had experienced a great and very beautiful revelation. And he had a tolerably good conscience, too.

The strange language grew easier for him. Indeed, when he had once got it in hand, he seemed to be able to do more with it than his companions did, and to come nearer than the others to the simple yet thoroughly subtle yellow people. They moved quickly over there. In the mornings, in order to get the reports of the London stock market sooner than the English companies, they translated them as quickly as possible into a cipher, and then hurried off to town, where they stood with the Chinese tradesmen in front of the samples of pepper and nutmeg and the heaps of loaf-shaped tin blocks. And they dealt with them discreetly, prophesying and admonishing, haggling, and finally closing the deal or letting it stand. Then they returned to the office to call the chief's attention to this or that point, and to make their various recommendations. Karl Eschen, with great awe, told them, "You just ought to see how dry and slick and good-humored Klaus Baas is in managing that old Swee Hong. That's where the old peasant stock comes out in him. He brings everything out with the most absolute conviction. I think he makes the old man feel as if his grandfather were talking to him." The chief smiled. "There's nothing deeper than one of those North Sea fellows," he said. "I once saw a fisherman from Büsum take in a fellow from Berlin. I can see his smug old face yet—it fairly glowed with gravity and truth."

As yet the Germans had not appeared in the local society, which was at that time exclusively English. Karl Eschen assured them that social intercourse was necessary for good feeling and for business. "Look here," he said to Klaus Baas, "now's your chance to learn the ways of society." Knowing that Klaus was saving in order to take home a little capital, Eschen offered him clothes and linen, but Klaus was broader and a little shorter than he, and they wouldn't fit. So he had a new gray suit made in haste. Then six of them called

on the English resident councillor, the English firms, and the Dutch doctor. Everywhere they were introduced to the ladies. It was not long before they were playing tennis with the tall, polite Englishmen who drawled out, "Take it easy, Mr. Baas," on the green in the evenings, just as they drawled the morning despatches. Soon they were dancing in the hall at the club with the long-faced, rather stiff Englishwomen in low cut evening gowns. The Englishmen were in full dress, the six Germans in white dinner jackets. It was an oppressively hot night, and after a spirited dance they were so wet that their shirts and collars suffered. So during the dance they ordered their boys to bring fresh linen into the next room. After making a quick change, they walked back into the hall clean and freshly starched, thus taking vengeance on the dress coats, and increasing their own self-respect. And they talked with great assurance about home and abroad, about goings and comings, and about the bouquet on the fluttering bosom near them. As they were going home, the fellow from Oldenburg led Klaus off to the Engineers' Club, where they were also having a little dance, and Klaus danced several times there with several half-caste girls half grown, with well developed yet slender figures, soft, dark faces, and dark, beautifully glowing eyes. There was one especially—quite too charming and gentle, light as a feather in dancing; a Blankenese girl could hardly dance that way—who rested quite contentedly in Klaus's arm. Klaus let her go only when Karl Eschen's grave face appeared in the doorway. He had been looking for Klaus, and he made him come away at once. On the way home Klaus and the man from Oldenburg could not praise enough the girl's beauty and gentleness. "Would you like to begin an affair with her?" asked Karl Eschen, dryly. "That might not be altogether agreeable for you, Baas. Would you like to marry her?—then go ahead! I can tell you, I'm going to get married some day,—but to a girl with bright hair and a white skin, one that knows how to reef a sail." That silenced the two enthusiasts. A few days

later Klaus saw the girl's father, a thick-set Irish agent, and her mother, a yellow, wrinkled Malay woman. Then he silently thanked Karl Eschen from the depths of his soul, and speedily forgot the dark beauty.

From that time on they were frequently guests at the club, around the comfortable big table. Peter Macdonald, who had been there a good while and had soaked himself pretty well in whiskey, would proceed to tell stories about the races in Singapore which he visited and took part in every year. When he got excited and, straddling his chair, showed them how he had ridden, helping out his illustration with hands and feet,—how they did laugh! Aside from business, he had no other interest than horses, and everything he said had to do with horses in some connection — sometimes a rather unfortunate one. One rather hot-tempered Scotchman, who could not bear his long withered face, and whom he had just asked for the hundredth time, “Well, what are you neighing at now?”—in a sudden fit of anger threw the mustard pot at his waistcoat. The little gray-haired English Jew, who came over once in a while from Rangoon, told his favorite tale: how once, when he was a young man, in Liverpool, he had been discouraged with life, and had tightly fastened his revolver with a vise to the edge of his desk. And he had sat there for a whole afternoon with the barrel pointing toward him, looking intently at the dangerous thing, and growing more and more doubtful about it and finally positively frightened. So then he had unfastened the revolver again, his gloomy thoughts had completely dropped away, and all was well with him. Then raising his finger, he admonished the young — “Don't despair too soon,” he said. “No, don't laugh!” But they did laugh! And Jack Hamilton said laughingly to Klaus Baas, “The Jews are very elastic people. An Anglo-Saxon would have done it surely.” It was pleasant on the second New Year's Eve, when they held a farewell celebration for Jack Hamilton, with a feast and fine drinks and much talk. Jack had been there almost twenty-five years, and was unspeakably glad to go back to his fair homeland again. He was

a thin little man, and, in spite of his fifty years, their best tennis player. He stood erect beside the table and to the amazement of all made his farewell speech—the first speech of his life. He spoke first of his life there, of the old office of his London firm, of his faithful servant, now dead, of the churchyard in which lay many that he knew. Then he spoke of his father's house in Wiltshire, where his brother was now living. His brother, he said, was as good as gold. They had gone to school and passed all their young years together in blissful peace, and his brother had been writing to him faithfully for twenty-five years. Now he was going home to him. And he pictured his father's house and the room he would have with its outlook over the soft beautiful country of dreams. They all sat without a word, bending low over the table, and not daring to look up, for they could tell by his voice that his eyes were full of tears. When he had finished they crowded around him, grasped his hands, and sang with shining eyes, "For he's a jolly good fellow!" An hour later, after a period of oppressive silence, he asked the man next to him to see him home. To their surprised inquiries he answered that he did not feel well. Early the next morning—Sunday—they learned that he had suddenly developed inflammation of the lungs and that he was dead. Just as they happened to be, some in dress coats, some in white tennis suits, they carried him to the cemetery, whose stones already bore so many English and Dutch names, and not a few German names as well.

After the burial, when the steamer on which Jack Hamilton had been going to sail had passed by the house on its way to the high seas, Klaus and Karl Eschen mounted their horses, according to their usual Sunday afternoon custom. Karl Eschen had insisted that his companion indulge in this luxury, for "You simply must be able to sail and to ride," he had said. They rode in long-continued silence along the broad coast road. "Did you see," Karl Eschen said at last, in a moved voice, "how our Oldenburger wept at the grave? He felt that he would never get home again either. Anybody that can't let whiskey alone here is



done for. But the soundest aren't safe either. Who would have thought that Jack Hamilton would go?"

"Two years from now you'll be home again," said Klaus Baas.

"Two years from now!" said Karl Eschen. After a while he said, "It isn't a good time for a trip now, but we've got to get that mine working. And then a steady rise in tin seems to be coming. The chief has all kinds of objections to the trip, but my brother insists on it. We can get to Klang on the Hyelong in eight days; from there we still have a four days' trip on foot."

Klaus Baas had a tidy little sum left from his salary, with which he now and then made a little venture on his own account. "Then early to-morrow morning," he said, "I'll certainly close a deal on those two bales of hides. I'll make three hundred dollars."

Karl Eschen looked askance at his companion. "You don't seem to think of anything but your own business," he said.

Klaus Baas felt the reproof. "The chief knows about it," he said. "He even recommended the deal to me."

"The chief!" said Karl Eschen. "You can be sure that there's more than one chief that speculates behind his firm's back. You are sent here to look after the interests of the house in Hamburg. There's something not quite fine in private ventures of that sort, Baas. A business man's got to be straight from start to finish. That gets him a clear conscience."

Klaus Baas bit his lips. He was accustomed to have Karl Eschen use these hours to get in a stab at his peasant quality whenever and wherever it appeared; but it never ceased to vex him.

Karl Eschen looked over at him. "You're always too tense," he said; "you *sit too tight*." Then, laughing at his own joke, "A man must have a calm conscience and must show it, even on horseback."

"Come, that's enough!" Klaus Baas said, laughing, and urging his horse to a gallop.

Eight days later they started for the mine. It was

February — not a good time to travel. On the passage they had all sorts of discomforts, for the sea was rough, the badly adjusted engines of the steamer pounded and shrieked, the food was bad, and on the whole steamer there wasn't a really clean spot. Besides, they both had to contend with seasickness. Still, the weather held good and the west wind was fresh. But when they reached land and began the journey into the interior the weather took a turn. At one time the sun was burning; at another there were great downfalls of rain, accompanied by regular tempests. First they went up the river in a row-boat, then they made their way slowly forward on foot, now through swamps with a high growth of virgin forest, now through little Malay villages, now up and down hills through a sort of Holstein landscape, in the midst of which, in a gloomy upturned field, an abandoned tin mine several times appeared. They passed the black stifling nights in the rest-houses with little enough comfort. Two faithful Hindus of the Kling stock and a rather old Chinaman accompanied them as agents.

On the way they saw several mines in which the tin, which lay like grains in the sandy ground, was being washed out with water-power. With the aid of their Chinaman, they tried to get all the information they could about water-power, workmen, wages, salary, and values.

On the fourth day, not in very good case, they reached the mine. They sent at once for several of the workmen and investigated the extent of the mine and the amount of tin, and the available water-power. They made several smelting experiments, and questioned the men that lived there very carefully. On the fifth day they came to the conclusion that they would keep the mine and work it themselves, since they were right there on the place and were young and energetic, and since the necessary working capital was not estimated at more than a hundred thousand marks. That evening they sat together with a rather weak whiskey and soda, and in spite of the fact that neither was in very good shape, they felt fairly content for the first time on the trip.

But the next morning Klaus woke to find Karl Eschen standing beside his bed. Karl complained that he had had a severe attack of dysentery, that the cholera drops he had taken hadn't done him any good, and that he had had a bad night. He tried to go around Klaus Baas to get to his bed, but stumbled against Klaus's feet and fell helpless on his knees.

Klaus Baas jumped up and helped him back to bed. Then he waked the people in the next shed, and questioned the sleepy Chinaman about a doctor and native remedies. He sent the two Klings out into the driving rain, apparently with no more definite aim than to see whether a doctor or else a man who knew something about the sickness might be in one of the rest-houses near them. While he was hunting in the little medicine chest, the sick man told him that he had been struggling against the disease for some weeks, and had taken medicine for it, with no effect. But his brother had urged him to settle matters at the mine one way or another. Karl had to get up again and again, and he was already so weak that he had to support himself upon Klaus's arm. Klaus Baas saw that all night he had passed what seemed to be almost plain blood. He decided, if he could manage it in any way at all, to set off back to the coast with or without the sick man's consent.

But when evening came, fever set in, and by midnight Karl Eschen's strength had declined so much that he was delirious. In his fever he talked about death as though it were the most natural thing in the world. With unnatural calm he asked Klaus Baas "when it is all over" to take the money and read the letters he had in his pocket. Then he collected himself, dictated a power of attorney, and signed it. "To-morrow," he said, "is the first day I was going to do something for our firm, and now I must die to-day." After a while he said, "My brother is not a bad business man, but he isn't firm with his wife. You will get somewhere, Baas. If you succeed, look after my mother a little; it's horrible to think that she may come to want." Klaus Baas seized the hot hand and promised

faithfully to look after her. Then he clasped Karl's hand tighter and told him that he was going to get well again and that they would go home together. But he couldn't bear to look upon Karl's suffering any longer, and went out in front of the tent.

For years he had not prayed — had not had any religious feeling whatever. Now, standing there in the pouring rain, staring out into the black night, he tried to pray. But the tempest broke loose again. The lightning flashed through the air like quivering torches; the thunder crashed with ungodly force and speed. In the silence between the crashes the monkeys in the wood sent their ugly hoarse cries through the night. From farther off came the wild roar of a tiger. It seemed to Klaus that the God of his native land was not here, had naught to say here, and could not be reached in the midst of voices like these. Yet passionately, in keen torment, his soul cried out at random to "God and all the powers" for the life of his comrade, "whom I love so tremendously."

But he went inside, still uncomforted — feeling, indeed, as if he had been driven back and confused. He found Karl raving in delirium. He was telling his mother and sister about his experiences in India. Then he wrote a long letter to his brother, telling him not to part with the mine at a sacrifice so that his wife might go to Paris and buy bronzes and silk petticoats. He lay there restlessly for a long time, agonizing in a bed of his own blood.

When a slight but clear fresh breeze sprang up toward morning, Klaus had Karl carried out of the hut and sat with him under the open sky. The sick man's head became a little clearer. He recognized that death was near, and charged Klaus Baas again with greetings for his family. Then he lost himself in visions; on the Alster he saw his sail standing to a good breeze; and he called to his friends in another boat. Then, at the Henley races on the Thames, he couldn't find the right gangplank. Gradually he sank into a subdued moaning. As if from a distance he called several times for his mother. Then the young strong body suddenly collapsed; his breathing became slower and

more difficult, until at last it came only with great effort. Then it ceased altogether. Klaus Baas crouched beside him for a while longer, staring breathlessly. Then he got up.

For about an hour he paced up and down before the dead man, sighing heavily. Every once in a while he stopped, bent over Karl, and looked in his face, then went on walking back and forth, wringing his hands, or clasping them to his head. His poor mother! thoughts of this sort pursued Klaus's soul like hounds. "Oh, God, his poor mother! How can I tell her? His poor sisters! Dreadful—horrible! And I—what shall I do? My only friend! What shall I do now? Send the news down to the coast! He has helped me always—from the first day of my apprenticeship it has always been Karl. Not another soul! No one else has concerned himself about me. But oh, his poor mother! What shall I do? Send the news to the coast!—I must bury him here."

He went into the hut and wrote a short despatch, telling of the death and of the power to act that Karl had given him. He put the paper in his pocket again however, and went over the field to look for a place for the grave. He searched for a while, then went back again and gazed upon the dead man, then returned, and after a long time finally selected a place for the grave between the great roots of a tremendous waringa standing halfway up a gentle slope. People would certainly let that alone, he thought. He returned to the hut and found that the two Klings and the Chinaman had returned. With their help he carried the dead man to the place he had chosen, himself helped to dig the grave, and laid him, covered with his cloak, in the deep brown earth. In a voice that grew huskier with every word, he repeated "Our Father" in German. He no longer knew the benediction, so he said only, "Farewell, my comrade. God be with thee."

He sent the men back to the hut, and seating himself on one of the big roots which projected a foot or so above the ground, he took out a piece of paper and proceeded to designate the exact situation of the grave according to

the points of the compass and all possible landmarks. Then he wrote in his pocket memorandum minute instructions to go to the chief and from him on to Hamburg. Since it was necessary for him to make everything perfectly plain, he became calmer while he was writing this. The high tension in which his soul had been for the past twenty-four hours was relaxed, and he wrote the rest of the necessary account, which was about business, with a clear head.

Then he sat there looking across the grave, with a feeling of cold bitterness. So this was life! In a few hours all a man's strength, work, ambition, hopes,—all swept away. And that was God's doing! Oh, well, God! What God? Oh, good heavens! One must just hold fast to the present and see what he can make out of that. Up to this time Klaus had had much to make him happy—a good father and mother, the help of the artist, the friendship of this good man. Now he stood entirely alone. Now he himself must take hold keenly and wisely. Earn money! What could he do? How could he take hold of this business and put it through? He had the power to act, but he had no money to carry on the thing. And he could hardly assume that Arthur Eschen would send it to him.

As he was sitting there in indecision, he saw three strange men strolling along the top of the hill talking to the Chinaman and the Klings. Then they came across the sunken fields toward him. One of them was a middle-aged Englishman who had been pointed out to him on the coast as a mine owner and a man who knew more about mines than any one else in the country. Another was a German who had also been on the coast with the other man, and who had been pointed out to Klaus as a prospector of some reputation. He was a shaggy, bold-looking fellow in a close-fitting khaki suit and worn leggings. The third man was an old Chinaman. They came up, and sitting down on the roots beside the newly made grave, asked Klaus who was the owner of the mine. When Klaus Baas said that the man who had just been buried had been

part owner with full authority, the Englishman said consolingly, "Well, then, he's lying on his own ground and soil — something that doesn't happen to every one by a long shot." "Right among his own tin," said the Chinaman. The German only said boldly, "Well, — what are you?"

Klaus Baas caught a look which the Chinaman threw the German. It said plainly, "Go slow." While he was trying to think of some way in which he could use these people, and was uncertainly hunting for words, — shaken as he was by his dreadful experience, — it struck him that he was talking and looking like a slow sort of fellow. And since he had begun to talk in this way he kept it up, dimly conscious that he could in this way entice them on and then suddenly surprise them. So he drawled on with a stealthily growing sense of grim satisfaction. He asked simple-minded questions, and made innocent objections here and there. And several times, as if he did not know a single mining expression, he would ask, "How is it, now, they say that?" Impelled further by his rôle, he indicated that he didn't care for the Eschen family, and didn't really know what he was going to do with the authority conferred upon him by the dead man. In pure sport, in nothing but the joy of artifice, — for in people of his kind, gravity and folly are like brother and sister — he seized a yellow board lying near, drew out his knife mechanically, and began to carve on it. In a confiding, childlike way he told them that he had wanted to be a wood-carver, but that he was an orphan and a distant relative of the Eschen family, and they had decided he must be a merchant.

"If the mine were of any value," said the Englishman, casually, "it would certainly be best in these circumstances, if the owner were to sell it."

The two others laughed, and said, "Who's going to bid on it?"

Klaus Baas disposed of that idea by a gesture with his knife: "That Eschen family is convinced that the mine is worth ten thousand pounds — and why sell it anyway,

they think. Eschens won't do that—out of pride, if nothing else. That's sure."

They were silent for a while. Then the Englishman began again, as casually as if he were speaking of the match which he threw on Karl Eschen's grave. "Then why don't *you* begin to work the mine? You have the authority."

Klaus Baas made a meditative gash in the wood. "I don't know anything about it," he said slowly and peevishly, "and I'm not interested in it. And besides, Eschens have no confidence in me and won't send me any money."

The German wanted to put in a word, but the Chinaman looked at him and he kept quiet. The Englishman emptied the contents of his short pipe out upon the grave and said genially, "Well, now, how would it be if we took over the working of it? We have everything right here—coolies, shafts, washers, and the necessary capital. We take over all the work, and you pay us in tin."

Klaus Baas put on a puzzled look. "That would be very nice," he said. "But there would have to be a regular contract—and it would have to be cheap."

Again they were silent for a while. Then the Englishman said, quite engrossed in lighting his pipe, "A contract for that kind of thing always leaves loopholes by which it can be broken, especially as the payment is made in tin. So we would make the condition that you stay here and look after the matter. We have confidence in you, and believe that we can come to an agreement. Do you think that they will let you stay here?"

Klaus Baas assumed a pleased and properly confused expression at this praise, and said genially, "If you wish it, I can stay for the time. At present there isn't anybody there that can take my place. Since in this way one of you will stay here too, it won't be so terribly lonely for me."

Then they drew up the usual contract, according to which they were to furnish such and such a force of men, the necessary machinery, and the outfit at a certain price, and lose their title to it so long as a specified quantity of



the tin was paid to them weekly, in kind, or at a price to be determined by the markets. Klaus, very much puzzled and worried, kept saying that he hardly knew — he really didn't dare — the contract would have to be favorable to him, and without a flaw — otherwise he couldn't venture on it. And he finally brought about one that was to his advantage.

The next day fully eighty men arrived with their tools, built huts, and began to dig with might and main. The three heads urged on the work as much as they could, evidently in a great hurry to get to the tin. Klaus Baas sat on the roots by Karl Eschen's grave and carved, using as a model his memory of the crossbeam over the door of their old house in Heisterberg, which bore this inscription, ornamented with many artistic flourishes,

Think not of any heavenly meed,  
For thy reward is in the deed.

Once in a while he looked over at the three urging the workmen along. Now and then the Englishman came over for a few minutes' friendly chat: did Klaus have any means of his own? A little capital was a pretty good thing to have. At that Klaus would look up eagerly, like a half-deaf man listening to a new kind of music, and say, "Well — yes — it certainly would be" — as if the money were going to drop out of a clear sky. And he laughed in his sleeve. He went calmly around among the workmen and assured himself that the veins were strong. Then he secretly sent a messenger to the coast, with a letter asking them to send him a reliable man.

Since they made a great deal of haste, and the weather was favorable, the smelting was finished in fourteen days. In two days more the first two hundred bars were loaded on the ox carts. Then Klaus threw away his stick and came over. The Englishman came up to him and tried to give him the report and a hundred dollar bill at the same time. Klaus refused both. He compared the report with the load and saw at a glance that the two did not agree. He made a new count, and a new division: so

much for them in payment, and so much for the Eschen firm.

They were tremendously surprised. They grumbled, and intimated that with this sort of management they would soon come into active dispute.

Klaus Baas answered curtly that they would fulfil their obligations in the future, or he would lay the matter before the proper authorities. Then he turned, went to his hut, and sat through the white moonlight night on a camp-chair with his revolver at hand, ready for any mischance.

By the next morning they had got over their huff. All three of them came to him and said, not without humor, "Well—isn't the wood-carving coming along?"

Too young, and lacking the self-confidence to chime in with their mood, he answered in a curt, ugly way, "I am a merchant like you."

On the next day a colleague from the coast, sent by the firm, came to stay with him.

He sent a report of all that had occurred to Hamburg, and recommended the extension of the mine as it was then in operation. And every week he sent the output of tin to the coast. The next month came a short letter from Arthur Eschen, conveying scanty thanks to Klaus for his information "concerning the death of our dear brother." The business would be settled by Klaus Baas's office. The office wrote that they were commissioned to sell "the unlucky mine" as soon as possible, and that they had decided to acquire it themselves. So Klaus, commissioned by his firm, remained at the mine for a half year longer. Then he asked for his return to the office. And so came his last day there, his last trip to the grave, and the homeward journey to the coast.

Again he sat at the bright yellow table, played again on the green grass, and in the evenings sat again in the hall. He had grown graver and more silent, more deliberate in speech and movement. Things would never be the same there again: Karl Eschen was gone; the fellow from Oldenburg had gone to Singapore; two new ones that had come were too young and frivolous for Klaus; the little

Japanese woman had gone back home ; and his trip to the mine, which might have brought him a signal independence, had not. So he sat in the evenings alone for many hours in his little room, reading all kinds of old magazines. He reflected with no great degree of comfort that he would have to wait for the promotion of three good men ahead of him before he could hope to get a more important position than that he now held. And he thought it would probably be a good deal wiser to give up his work there and try his luck further in Hamburg.

And so, earlier than he would have expected a year ago, came the day of his return.

Had four years really passed since he had landed here with his bright dreams? Could it be that over there, between the roots of the waringa, between the dark blue wooded hills, Karl Eschen was lying? Had the office there on Beach Street, which had been for him so full of puzzles and surprises, nothing more to offer him? Had the land in which he had hoped and dreamed of a wonderful future no future for him? Well, it was bad, and it was good ; that was the way it had happened. He would be glad that he was going home in pretty good health. He was still young, and he would manage to find work and success at home.

The steamer was larger than the one that had brought him over, and all the cabins were full. There were rather young folks, who were going home, as he was ; old men or old couples who were going home "for good." These were for the most part rather dull people ; the men talked about rates of exchange, and the women about dress and finery. And after dinner they sat down and gambled for three straight hours. There were also a German woman teacher, an Irish woman missionary, and an English merchant's young wife, who was continually rocking her twins in a tiny little hammock.

Klaus Baas sat now with this one, now with that, hunting for talk. He talked with the old merchants about trade and commerce in a slow, lazy way. And he was instructed by their wives about precious stones. But he

spent most of his time sitting with the young English mother, talking about her husband, her children, and her father and mother. He swung the hammock gently and played with the babies till he blushed in surprise at himself. And he ascertained, much to his own and the mother's amazement, that the babies' blue eyes were gradually turning brown.

At noon on a cloudy day in midsummer, they reached Hamburg after a good passage. He went with one of his travelling companions to a hotel and from there proceeded at once to H. W. Thauler's, curious to see whether the firm would hold out any prospects. He learned, however, that the way to advancement there was as it had been on the coast. And they made no attempt to keep him. His attempts to do business on his own account must have reached their ears. Rather cast down, Klaus went on to the office of H. C. Eschen. Arthur plainly had to make an effort to look at the man who had had in his hands the letters in which his younger and more honorable brother had remonstrated with him about some of his business dealings and about his household expenses. He said coldly that Klaus Baas's report of his brother's death had been so complete that he had nothing more to ask him. His mother, however, might like to see him. He did not ask a single question about what Klaus had on hand now.

Then Klaus started up the Mittelweg, and was soon standing in the old room among the dark oil paintings, in front of his friend's mother. He said to the weeping woman that he had come because her son had asked it, and because he was obliged to, — otherwise he would have preferred to stay away, for the sight of him could be only painful to her. He had already told her everything as accurately and truly as he could. Then he laid three dry twigs of the waringa, under which her son lay, on the big, round table, and said in a hollow and rather hard voice that her son had begged him to stand by her if she were ever in any trouble. He hoped that she never would be in trouble, but if she should be, he would do anything he

could for the mother of his dearest friend. She asked him no further questions, and he got up and waited for her to dismiss him. She gave him a long look through her tears, as if she would have liked to keep him, or had something more to say. But then she gave him her hand and pressed his hard. She said nothing about his coming again.

As he closed the door behind him, a door at the end of the dark passage opened a little and a narrow ray of evening sunlight penetrated along the hall. He looked, and in the ray of light he quickly recognized a girl's head, with the loose, light hair shining in the light. He went out through the vestibule and down the steps, thinking of the weeping woman and the girl in the ray of light, who must be little Sanna. He would have liked to see the child again, since he had always been so comically intimate with her. Then the door opened, and Klaus heard hesitating steps. He knew that it must be she. She hesitated a moment, then gave herself a shake, came down more quickly, and spoke to him. He thought she probably wanted to ask a question about her dead brother. But she said with great confusion, "I beg your pardon, Herr Baas—I want to ask you something. Once, four years ago, when I was ten, you lifted me out of one bed and put me in another, didn't you? Well, mama, and my sister, who is in Mexico now, and the maid we had then, have all sworn that they'll never tell any one about it. You must swear to me that you won't tell either, Herr Baas.

Klaus looked at the tall fine-looking child, with the strong, rosy mouth and the slightly projecting teeth, exactly as if he were looking at a grown lady. "I will indeed," he said politely, "but why?"

She looked down, and said importantly, though in some confusion: "There's a friend of mine—I should be ashamed to death if he found it out. Besides, he would be madly jealous. Please, Herr Baas! It would be beautiful if you would swear to me that you won't tell."

"Then I swear it," Klaus said, giving her his hand, and holding hers fast, while she turned her head away. Still

holding her hand, he asked jokingly, "Can you still imitate tigers and lions, as you could when you were six years old?" But she twisted her hand out of his, shyly, almost in distress, and went up the steps again. With a bitter look, Klaus shook his head. "Strange, proud people!" he said, and went on his way.

It was evening when he finally reached his own family, whom he found in a larger flat in Wex Strasse. He was amazed to see how the children had grown and developed. His mother, too, had grown stouter. He sat beside her at her sewing table, asking questions and enduring the questions of the youngsters. He learned that the artist was dead; that Kalli Dau was second mate on a ship that had passed his steamer in the Suez Canal. He had to get up and look at the room which Hanna now had to herself. She had grown to be a plump little teacher, a trifle pale, with straight light hair and soft nice eyes. Antje Baas sat there sewing and sewing, not saying very much, but looking up now and then with assumed indifference at the homecomer. He had to tell stories till thirteen-year-old Fritz, who was standing inside his arm, fell asleep with his head on his shoulder.

After he had rested a day and had got to rights, he went to P. C. Trimborn's office. He learned that in spite of his years his old chief had again made the long voyage to the South Sea, and that they had no place for him. Klaus was much cast down at his ill luck. He questioned his acquaintances here and there, but found nothing that would do. After a week of this he saw that for the present, at least, there was nothing left but to take a place in one of the big banks or shipping companies — one of those many small-salaried places in which a man can seldom, if ever, show that he has an idea or a will of his own. His mother soon began to look down on him with some scorn.

One day, when, after a vain excursion, he was coming down the Alsterdamm, he turned in at the Café Belvedere. He sat there thinking about his future and vexing himself about the waiter, who was serving him in a rather slovenly

way. "If my boy had dared to stand in front of me that way!" he thought. He felt — as every one feels in coming back home from a semi-cultivated life — the limitation of home. He pondered this way and that what he was going to do, and finally went back to the not altogether pleasing idea that it would be better to go across seas again and accept a little place in Brazil, in regard to which he was going to speak to an acquaintance here in the café. As he was staring out the window across the sunny Jungfernstieg, he saw coming over from the arcade a tall thin man in a black coat, with long tails flying out at the side keeping time with his somewhat sprawling legs. The evening sun shone through the ears standing roundly out from his head. To Klaus, in his depression, he was like a breath of fresh air. He stood up and beckoned to him.

Heini Peters was delighted. He asked about Karl Eschen's death, and told what he knew about their common acquaintances. But pretty soon he was back to his own affairs, which had always interested him more than anything else. "I've got a little office of my own now, Baas, a little agency in kitchen ware, along with my friend Busch. You don't know him. He's a fine fellow."

Klaus Baas wanted to know how the business went.

Heini Peters shrugged his shoulders, and said meditatively, "The old folks have to help out a little once in a while, but they're glad to do it, Klaus. I'm hoping it will be better in time."

"You pay too much attention to things that aren't business," said Klaus, reprovingly.

Heini Peters nodded gravely, and said, suddenly turned sentimental, "I've put it through, Baas! Do you know that our great poet's mother now lies buried in our cemetery? She isn't among the nameless any longer. She is lying under the the big linden where the paths cross. I go there day after to-morrow to assist at the dedication of the monument. Say, boy, I've an idea — come along with me! My old folks will like it tremendously, and so will several little girls! Charming little girls, I tell you! I've

often told them about you. Come on, now, come along. You're still looking kind of tired and under the weather. A week of fresh North Sea air will do you good."

"A week, man!" said Klaus, condescendingly, stroking his beard, "I can't stick it out as long as that in that little nest."



## CHAPTER XVI

THE town was situated on an open level stretch of fields bright with the green of May. A fresh breeze blowing in from the ocean rustled the trees stretching away, sometimes singly, sometimes in clumps and rows, past the low red houses. The town had a great many streets, which, however, seemed to be rather empty. On the square stood the big, unwieldy church, in comparison with which a farm wagon close by looked like a mere child's toy.

"Look," said Heini Peters, pointing his long arm at an old gray house plainly centuries old, "there are the old folks at the door — bless them! They're getting along in years, Klaus. They didn't marry till pretty late. Bless their hearts — why, it would kill them if *I* was to cross the ocean." He waved his hat, and his long coat tails waved too. "I'm bringing along the Indian," he cried to them. "He's still sunburned, and a bit parched."

The two old folks shook Klaus's hand and led him at once to the table where dinner was set. They questioned him about his trip, and Heini's mother kept saying, "Good heavens, Heini, what if you had to make a trip like that!" And they asked him about his family and about everything that he and Heini had done together. And Klaus Baas sat there comfortably, well pleased with the place and the time. He looked around him, now at the attractive, well covered table, now at the pretty pictures on the wall, now at the three kindly people, who treated each other with such droll solicitude, urging each other to have some more of the light red wine — "Oh, thank you, you're so kind!" "Look out for yourself, father!" "You aren't looking out for yourself a bit, child!" "Come now, Heini dear, just one more little sip!"

After dinner Heini Peters took Klaus by the arm to show him the sights of the town. They were, first, the church, which had formerly been the place of worship for the whole country-side. Now it was far too large for the purpose it served; yet, old and crumbling as it was, it was the pride of the town. Then there was the old farm-house, with its hanging thatched roof, its elegant masonry, and beautifully carved beams. They had found it out in the country beside a little grove of oaks, near a lonely village. It had been passed over by the devastating hand of time, and they had brought it here and placed it under the old lindens, so that it and the contents of its old hall and rooms might show the life and customs of their forefathers. There was the county court-house, which in its strength and placidity was a fair type of these solid people. And there was the newly built schoolhouse, in the pleasant rooms of which — or, at playtime, under the young lindens — the young people of the little town collected. On the street leading to the harbor there were several rather ambitious industries, some old, others newer. There was a coal importing business, a big joinery, two grain houses, and an imposing woodyard with great stocks of beams and huge piles of laths. "Here," said Heini Peters, pointing to a fine-looking house next to the woodyard, "here lives the prettiest girl in town. She's a charming creature. She was standing at the window looking at us just now. Now she's gone. I've often told her about you. Well, you'll see her. Now we'll go on to the cemetery."

The cemetery was also full of lindens. A straight line of them surrounded it; here and there they stood between graves; and some especially tall and beautiful ones bordered paths diagonally across it.

If Heini Peters had been roused before, he was now absolutely inspired. His voice was low with emotion, and his long stride had something solemn about it. He showed Klaus the sexton's house — a red roof deep in the green shadow of the trees. "Here," he said, "lives my dearest friend. No one else knows so much about this cemetery

as we two. And no one else loves it as we do." He took Klaus to a big white bench turned toward the sunset and commanding a view of the whole cemetery covered with yellow dandelions. "We sit here for hours at a time," he said. "Ah, when the sun goes down and the clouds burn around it, and each one of the little mounds casts its shadow, and we sit and talk about the dead—there are no more beautiful hours than those. Do you see that vault," he whispered, "that one over there? Forty years ago they buried there a big, heavy man named Daniel Tamp. He was one of the most distinguished men hereabouts, and he weighed two hundred pounds. Now what do you think: three years ago, when I was walking up and down these paths with my friend one autumn evening, I saw that the side wall of the vault had collapsed. We opened it up a little more and went in. We wanted to see what was left now of that huge man. We raised the coffin lid, and what do you think was left of him—of that big, fat, distinguished man?" He snapped his fingers and laughed low and merrily. "Well, nothing at all—not so much as that! He owned two farms, and he weighed two hundred pounds. And three preachers followed him to the grave. And not a thing left—nothing. A tiny little bit of mouldy earth—not more than a handful. Now where was he, say?" Still laughing, Heini went on, stood still a moment, and then said again in a low voice: "Now just look at this grave. There's another story. On one of the farms near here there was a weak-minded, lame girl. She played all her life long—and she lived till she was nearly sixty—with a great big horse-chain; didn't do another thing the whole day but sit and play with that chain, which got as shiny as silver from the constant handling. When at last she died, people naturally didn't want to have that chain around, so they buried it with her. Now just think of it. Suppose the day comes when they'll be digging and working here, and suppose they find that heavy chain. What will they think? Why, they'll think of murder and homicide and imprisonment, and see—it was just her

plaything. And they'll never conceive that for once the truth was stranger than their imagination." He laughed to himself and went on to the end of the row, where there were several uncared-for graves. Then he pointed to a grave which still kept its shape, though it was covered with grass and dandelions. "Now," he said, seizing Klaus's arm, "just look at this grave. There was an old woman here that everybody knew because she had the strangest way of always looking on the wrong side of things—always on the lookout for ill luck or trouble. And she didn't criticise only the present state of things—she didn't prophesy anything but misery to come. She went around here as glum as you please and everybody tried to keep out of her way. And no wonder, for she passed the same judgment on everybody else's doings and hopes that she passed on her own—her continual 'It's all upside down.' Well, she died, and was buried here in this grave. While she was being buried, the pastor and my friend the sexton didn't happen to be watching the operation very closely because there were some children running around in the graveyard. And so it happened that the pall-bearers let the coffin down into the grave with the head pointed to the west. Of course the pastor and my friend saw it at once. They exchanged a glance which said plainly, 'The old lady's playing us one more trick.' But then they exchanged another glance which undoubtedly meant, 'It serves her right. She shall just lie that way. She's pestered such a lot of folks with her everlasting 'It's all upside down,' and she can just lie upside down in her grave.' So they filled up the grave and thought everything was all right. But one Sunday evening a short time after this, when I happened to come over from Hamburg and came to see my friend, he confessed to me that thinking about the old lady left him no peace. It bothered him because, in the first place, she had always prophesied bad luck and had now fulfilled the prophecy herself in lying wrong end to in her grave; and secondly, because she must be having some kind of existence somewhere now and was probably calling down all

kinds of bad luck on his head and the pastor's. And then besides, what if there should be a resurrection right here in the cemetery and all the dead should stand right up with their faces pointed to the east, out of which the Messiah is to come, or where the sun rises, or whatever way you want to put it; and suppose the old lady should be the only one pointed the wrong way, — why, she might go crazy, or get mighty troublesome, and let loose at him, if he were standing there too — and Lord knows what mightn't happen. He simply couldn't reason it out, and it nearly drove him out of his wits. Well, the upshot was that one night we got two of the neighbors, dug up the old lady, and put her right about." Heini laughed and snapped his fingers. "Isn't that the craziest thing you ever heard? Now isn't it? Come, let's go on."

"And now look here," he said, in a tone of solemn unction, as he pointed to a newly made grave in a beautiful spot at the cross-road, under the shadow of a mighty linden. A monument wreathed with flowers read "Here lies the mother of the mighty poet!" Heini laid his long thin hand on the stone. "She was lying over yonder among the paupers," he said. "I arranged to have her transferred; and now she is resting here. I am proud that Providence singled me out to accomplish this honor. And I invited you here to-day, Klaus, and brought you to the cemetery, just because the monument is to be dedicated to-day."

And indeed all kinds of people, old and young, in their Sunday clothes, were gradually appearing in the several roads that led to the cemetery. They wandered up and down the side paths, stopped here and there at a grave, then collected and came toward the cross-road. Soon a solemn little procession came up the linden walk. First came gayly dressed little girls carrying baskets of flowers, and accompanied by their teacher. Behind them came the members of the city council and the pastors. Then one of the pastors stepped forward, took off his velvet cap, and, in a weighty speech, commemorated the mother and her son. He proved that it is quite possible

for a minister of the gospel, provided he is himself a strong personality and a social force, to penetrate the dense barrier of church doctrine and to understand another strong personality and social force, even though such a one has gone his way quite remote from all religious doctrine and all conventional ideas.

Klaus Baas, however, was twenty-six years old. He had been for four years far away from home and from the white-skinned Holstein girls. And so it happened that he found all this vastly unnecessary — the crass sentimentality of Heini Peters, who during the pastor's address studied the monument with deep emotion, and the solemnity of the whole thing. The pastor's speech he thought extravagant. What a to-do about two dead people, he thought. And he looked around him at the young people standing in groups between the graves. In an older part of the cemetery across the main road, he spied a prettily dressed girl with light brown hair, standing with two or three companions beside a tall dark hedge of yew. There was a delicate charm in her fine face and her well shaped head. And she seemed the more appealing because she was a bit embarrassed, for she had by mistake got nearer to the ceremonies than she wanted to be, and yet she could not make up her mind to give up her high position on the old grave. While he was staring at the pretty vision, some one must have whispered to her, "He's looking at you," for she cast a pretty, shy, startled glance across at him. His heart jumped into his throat. "That's certainly the girl that lives in the house next to the woodyard," he thought. "She's heard of me, and she saw me a little while ago. What a dear beautiful girl she is!"

He glanced across at Heini Peters, whose red head was still sunk under the burden of memory and of his own good deed. Then Klaus noiselessly stepped back, and without looking up, gained the outside of the ceremonial circle. He took a position from which he could see all of her; her little brown hand lying on the iron railing, her finely formed, well curved hips, her tender bosom under

the light dress. And finally she sent him another glance full of shy curiosity. "Lord, how beautiful she is!" he thought.

The services ended, and the old people went back to the graves they knew. The children gazed covetously at the butterflies fluttering among the flowers between the graves. The dignitaries strolled placidly down the broad road. Suddenly Klaus Baas saw Heini Peters standing beside her. She blushed at what he said, and gave a little nod. Before Klaus knew it he was in front of the little mound clasping her cool little hand while Heini Peters was saying, "This is Martje Ruhland of the wood-yard. Wasn't the ceremony touching, Martje? Now, Klaus—now that the people have gone away, just see how the peace of a Sunday afternoon rests upon the graves." And Klaus kept on holding her hand and looking up with silent joy into her eyes. She bowed in embarrassment, and said, in a thin little voice, "I saw you going past our house—but now I must be going home." Holding her hand, he drew her down from the grave.

They walked along together, and he told her how he had been wanting to come here for a long time, and now at last had had the desire and the opportunity together, and how much he liked to be there. She looked up at him shyly with eyes that showed her whole soul—a shy, good woman's soul. They passed through a chestnut walk. And Klaus was just saying how new and lovely home seemed to him, when they crossed the woodyard with its stores of boards and beams, and Heini Peters said, "We'll stop in and have coffee at Martje Ruhland's."

The family was already sitting around the table. They greeted Heini Peters as the son of their neighbors and an old acquaintance. And they were very cordial to the young stranger. The father, a small, beardless man, asked how the services had gone, praised the pastor, and had some fault to find with the mayor. The mother, a pleasant little woman, grown pretty gray, with soft, almost timid eyes, like her daughter's, told about her sons, who,

to her great grief, were all away, but, thank God, all in very good positions. The oldest was in a wood company, at Kiel. He was to take over the father's business sometime. The other two had a very prosperous factory in Berlin. At all this the father shook his head good-humoredly. "Well, well," he said, "you must make all kinds of allowances. Mothers always have a big opinion of their children, and our mother has especially." That didn't bother her a bit, however, and she went on talking about her boys. An older daughter came in. She had on a black dress, for she was already a widow. Her movements were restless, and she had large, sorrowful eyes. She began to ask Klaus questions about the treasures of India, and was sorry when Klaus laughingly said that he hadn't seen many of them—hardly more than a dumpy old Chinaman had carried in his yellow hands. Martje, the youngest of the family, passed to and fro, serving. In a voice that seemed to Klaus too tender and new ever to have been used before, she asked every one if he didn't want some more coffee or cake.

Only two or three times in his life had Klaus Baas sat at a meal with a respectable, well-to-do family. The last time had been four years ago, when he had been a dubious guest in the Mittelweg in Hamburg, among the dark old oil paintings. Now he was sitting in the home of the loveliest girl in the world, right at her table, with her simple friendly family. And now her dress touched his arm—think of it! How unspeakably delicate and unaffected she was in every movement! How timidly she looked at him while Heini Peters was telling about the tin mine! If he only dared to jump up and seize both her hands! It wasn't possible, was it, that she should be engaged! Oh, God, to think that another man had kissed that dear head! That another man would take unto himself that pure, womanly life, take it and shield it from all perils! He went on telling the older daughter this thing and that which he had heard about the treasures of India. He asked interested questions about the robbery and murder which the mother had been reading about.



He promised the father that he would consider joining a skat club in Hamburg. But all this talk was superficial. He had heart, eyes, ears, only for the beautiful delicate child.

Then when Heini Peters tactlessly got up to go, declaring that they had been sitting at the table two hours, Klaus had to get up too. When he gave his hand to Martje, he noticed with joyful emotion that although he held it a good while, she did not draw it away. She went to the door with him and stood leaning against the post. How slender and finely made she was! And since she talked with them a while longer as they stood on the street, he could give her his hand again, look at her again, and happily meet her eyes. Then he had to go.

He stormed Heini Peters with questions, and discovered only good about her. He didn't take into consideration that Heini was not a good judge, and he didn't listen very well, anyway. He had seen her and her family. Could there be anything more cordial and sincere than that family? "They're thoroughly worthy people," said Heini Peters, with his usual conviction, "well established, generally respected, and well-to-do. That oldest son, who is in the wood business at Kiel, is rather stiff and solemn. I don't care for him much. The other two are nice fellows. They have a musical instrument factory in Berlin. The oldest daughter had an unfortunate marriage, and she's a little fantastic: She gets that from her mother."

"Tell me," said Klaus Baas, in a fever of excitement, for which the Indian sun was partly responsible, "how is it possible that a dear lovely girl like that has remained unengaged so long?"

Heini Peters made a sweeping gesture with both arms. "Because," he said, in sustained despair, "because the world is crazy. But then, too, she's just twenty-three, and is somewhat shy—you must have seen that. She ought to have more assurance. I'd marry her myself in a minute, but my friend Busch says that I'm not yet ripe for marriage, that my heart's still too unstable."

“Oh,” said Klaus Baas, irritably, “get out with your friend Busch!”

Every day now he went to the house next to the wood-yard, either alone or with Heini Peters. He went in the mornings for a cup of tea, for a cup of coffee about three or four, or for tea again at six. They always sat chatting for a long time, and they always seemed to have time for it. He enjoyed going over the woodyard with the father and talking about Pomeranian beams, Swedish pine, and Prussian laths. And he liked especially to look over a local business in this way and to show how easily a good merchant can understand a business other than his own. How thoroughly the man knew everything about the little town, its government, its associations, and its houses. And his opinions were all to the point. Klaus also enjoyed talking to the mother, who sat hour after hour at the window busy with her lace-maker's pillow, now and then glancing at the novel lying open beside it. She told charmingly about what she was reading — the princesses, the peasant boys, and the Cinderellas that married princes. And how prettily she talked about her children. Oh, thought Klaus, they were thoroughly good sociable people — a fine product of centuries of culture. Their grandfather had been a councillor of state or something of that sort. What had Klaus Baas's grandfather been? A day laborer — a thatcher. One of the sons had promised Martje a trip to Italy; and the other had prematurely invited her to his wedding. The daughter of a distinguished officer was well disposed toward him. Wasn't it funny to hear the father say, with his pleasant dubious little laugh, “Well, well, mother, if it turns out that way —” That oldest daughter, the widow, was tremendously interesting too; she was thawing out more and more. With sparkling eyes, she talked somewhat darkly about people who wrongfully possessed great riches. But there were people who knew about the wrong done her, and they would wrest away from them the casket with the seven keys. The father meantime laughed his inimitable little laugh, and said, “There you are back to

that casket again. You're always on the same theme." But what of Martje as she sat opposite her mother, with the bobbins flying between her fair fingers? How lightly and beautifully she moved through the pleasant room! Certainly she was the sweetest girl he had ever seen. And really, all in all, the man that had a right to sit in this circle, to belong to this family, after a youth of restraint, after four years of a strange foreign land, and after a not too warm home-coming — could count himself lucky.

In the evenings he sat for a long time by the lamp in the little room that Heini Peters had given up to him. Unable to sleep, he read for a long time in the books of poetry the pretty love poems that Heini had illustrated with wonderful complicated designs in blue. He read the old and the new tales — from Chloe and Daphne and things of that sort to Fredericka and Erica. He scanned the pictures of all sorts with which Heini Peters had adorned his room. There were dainty women in draperies of every description; there were cemeteries; there was a huge death's head, which, when seen at closer range, proved to be two beautiful girls, whose pretty dark heads formed the empty eye sockets. Heini always had a leaning toward the symbolic.

Toward evening on the fourth day, he went over to the Ruhlands'. The air was still and sultry, and seemed to threaten storm. Grown more at home, Klaus had passed through the chestnut lane and was strolling along the garden across from the woodyard when he came upon Martje sitting by herself in the arbor. She tried to hurry away shyly without a word, but he begged her to stay, sat down on the bench at some distance from her, and began to talk. With fast beating heart, he asked her question after question — about anything at all he happened to think of — about illnesses she had had, or dangers she had escaped, about her friends, and any little trips she had taken. Gradually she became a little more confidential. She sat leaning against the little round table, with her hand resting, now clenched, now outspread, upon it.

He leaned forward; and soon he was chatting about their hands; didn't the red stone go prettily with that shade of brown. Then firmly, though his heart was beating fast, he laid his hand upon her delicate little one, which, like a surprised, terrified butterfly, suddenly ceased fluttering and grew quite still. In a great burst of feeling, he shook it and cried, "I love you more than anything else in the world. Tell me—do you care for me a little?"

She looked up at him timidly, and her breath came fast. "But I can't go to Hamburg," she cried. "I want to stay with my mother."

He laughed, quite beside himself with love and admiration. "Oh, my darling, my precious! That can be arranged. If you just love me! You must tell me that now," and he bent down to look in her eyes.

Quite overcome, she turned and looked up at him, timidly, as if he were much more formidable now than he had been before. "But I will not leave my mother," she repeated.

This sweet timidity set him beside himself. He drew her to him tempestuously. She yielded for just a second, then drew herself away with a quick, "I must go," and flew. When he came out of the arbor she was not to be seen.

He stood for a while in a perfect transport. Then in the mood of a man who must and will secure at once the one splendid thing that life can hold, he turned short around to look for Martje's father in the woodyard. He told him at once what he wanted of him. And then, standing there among the Pomeranian planks, he told him about his father and his mother, his early years, his education, and his prospects.

The father listened with a good-humored smile. "We saw it coming," he said. "We noticed that you liked our little girl, and that she liked you. And we've already talked about it. Come in with me."

They went into the comfortable room with all its knick-knacks on the tables, pictures, what-nots, lace-pillows, and flower stands, and the father told them what had happened.

The mother dropped her hands and wept. It would be very hard to give up her child, although she had perfect confidence in him as an old friend of Heini Peters. Still, it was hard for a mother. The older sister wept, too, and said that it would be hard to give the child up. Then she wandered off to her familiar theme, the casket. When she got that settled she would buy the child a piece of jewelry as an additional wedding gift; and it would be regal. The father walked cheerfully up and down the room without bumping into a single stand or table. Now and then he put in a word good-humoredly. "Come, stop crying, mother; it was to be, you see. And it's very nice as it is, very nice. Can't you stop harping on your casket, Flora? Better go and hunt up your little sister instead." Then Klaus ran out to hunt for her. He found her in the kitchen helping to get supper, as usual. She let him take her into the room, in great confusion. And then she began to go to and fro at once as if what they were talking about did not concern her in the least.

They told Klaus Baas that they all wanted him to help in the wood business. He and Martje were to move into the little house with the pretty little garden at the other end of the woodyard. The two younger sons had no liking for the business; and the eldest had not got along very well with the father. He had a good position in Kiel, and he preferred to remain there. So it was a fine thing that Klaus Baas was a business man. And since, as they had noticed, he knew so well how to deal with people, things could hardly be better.

Klaus listened to their proposition with shining eyes. He told them how grateful he was to them all for taking him right into their midst as they had. He felt indescribably at home there. He had had some hard times, especially the lonely years in India. And so he had been drawn by the friendliness he had received from them all, just as he had been by Martje's character and her love. The mother listened to him with tears in her eyes, and the father clapped him on the shoulder.

When he was leaving a few hours later, at dark, she

went hand in hand with him to the door. When they got there he put his arm around her cautiously and began to talk in a low voice about how quickly his fortunes had turned, about how in six weeks time she would be his wife, how he would be able to see her at the window from the office, and how in the evenings they would walk together in the chestnut lane. She listened without a word, standing quietly within his arm, and seeming, as he talked, to be listening to the gently falling rain. When he asked her if she wasn't happy now she nodded slowly; and when he pressed her, he found that she was especially glad because she was going to stay so near her father and mother. The thought of this seemed to give her confidence, for she let him draw her to his breast and kiss her. He wondered at her calmness — almost indifference, for he had already learned that a girl breathes more deeply in her lover's arms; so he pressed her to him more passionately and kissed her harder. Then she simply drew away, with a calm, friendly air. He let her go, thinking, "Ah, well, that will be different some day — as soon as you are living over there with me, dear!" He pressed her hands; she could not see his happy, passionate eyes.

As he walked alone down the chestnut lane, the tide of wonderful emotion and overwhelming joy ebbed surprisingly soon, leaving him calmer and soberer than he had been for these four days. It struck him suddenly that he had taken a monstrously important step — indeed, the most important step of his life — without due consideration. He stood still; a mood of calm reflection began gradually to take possession of him. He looked at what had happened in connection with his life up to this point, representing it as it would look to his mother, to the calm gaze of his dead friend in the Pendja valley, and finally as it appeared to himself. Well, so that was his fate! He felt distinctly, with an unpleasant sense of shame, that he had not brought it about himself, but that he had slid along like a boat driven by the current, rushing in any direction.

He felt very quiet, as he listened to the meditation of

his own heart. Was it, after all, a good and a right thing to do? He listened to the raindrops falling one after another upon the leaves of the lindens, and then to the ground — falling — falling monotonously. That was the way his life would go now — slowly, equably, pleasantly. He used to think that it would be different — bold, strenuous, aiming high. So much for the rainbow dreams of youth — mere visions. Well, if Karl Eschen were living, or if Herr Trimborn had been in Hamburg — it might have been different. But as he was — without money and without connections! There was no great future here, certainly, in a wood business in a rather small town. But the business was a good sound one. With industry and wise management, it would be possible to enlarge it. He would get up early and dig and grind. And above everything else — Martje Ruhland! Martje Ruhland! What a dear name — and not half so dear as she herself. The sweetest of all women, and his own, his very own. He had found the woman that fulfilled his long-cherished, passionate desire for pure and lovely womanhood. And she fulfilled it absolutely.

He went on a few steps and then stopped again. “Well, then,” he said in amazement, “why am I not happy, when I have been so blissful these last few days? Was all my bliss, all my desire, simply in winning her?” The raindrops fell heavily, almost meditatively. “Slowly, slowly,” they seemed to say. “Take time — slowly but surely.” Raising his head, he looked up the narrow street. Again he was beset by the tormenting feeling that his life would now be lost within narrow limits, without fame or glory. So, in a strange mood of mingled happiness and depression, he went on toward the square.

Six weeks later he asked his mother whether she would come to the wedding with him. She had no time and no desire to celebrate weddings, she answered coldly. She would come to see them some time later, provided things went well with them. She worked as carefully as she could to get him ready, and made a dress for Hanna to wear to the

wedding. But she did it all with the greatest indifference, as if it were a matter of no importance, and as if it was really asking too much that she should excite herself about such foolishness as her son's marrying and going away.

But when he held out his hand to say good-by to her in the dark kitchen on the morning of the wedding-day — Hanna was already waiting outside on the steps — she suddenly threw her arm around his neck and wept as if her heart would break.

Klaus was terrified. "Mother, what's the matter?" he asked.

"Do you think it's easy for me to have you go away?" she said, between her sobs. "I am losing you now. You're going to have a wife and children. And there was only one man in the house."

Klaus tried to comfort her, but she forced him out. "Go, go," she said.

He walked silently along by his sister's side, simply astounded at what had happened. During the last few years his relationship to his mother had been that of having the same task — to bring up the fatherless children. And he had not thought of or felt anything beyond that. But it was clear to him now that through all these years his mother had been loving him as her son, and as a man in the house as well; and perhaps as the image of her dear dead husband, too. Now that he was going, she was losing her dead altogether! And they had no picture of his father! "There's something strange," he thought, "about the heart of a wife and a mother like that. It reaches down deep." And he kept shaking his head at his discovery. How anxious she must have been about him all through the past! He had always been so restless, so high-spirited, so important about nothing, so fanciful. Dear, severe, strange mother that she was! As he walked quietly along by his sister's side, he saw her in a new light, which surrounded the gray head like a finer, more clearly defined halo. Even now she was probably still standing by the hearth, crying and thinking about him. Dear, strange mother! He loved his mother now for the first time, and



for the first time he had a sense of prevailing over her. Quite sure of himself, he said to Hanna, "Be kind to mother, and be sure to tell the children expressly to be good to her. Don't forget—I tell you, you can look a long while before you find a mother like that. I know from experience."

Late that evening Klaus Baas was standing at the back door with his little wife, waiting for a chance to go home to the little house at the other end of the woodyard unobserved by the guests that still remained. He was tenderly stroking her hair and cheeks, as she stood there calm and silent. Suddenly, with a strange little gesture of entreaty, she put her hands on his breast. "Let me stay just this one night with mother," she begged. "Please, please!"

He was terribly disappointed, and he felt blank. Then his magnanimous spirit swiftly interceded for her. "Isn't it really lovely—such filial love, and such shyness." He would have to help her, always cautiously, to develop into a freer, more complete person. So he caressed her, asked for a kiss and received it, and then went alone across the woodyard. He stood for a while at the door, looking over at the light that appeared in her virginal little room. With a great and pure love he thought of his tender young wife; and his heart was full of the desire to be good to her, to help her, and to work for her.

## CHAPTER XVII

HE treated her very considerably and very kindly. But he was a man, and he had a firm grasp on life, both inside and outside the little red house. And he meant to be master absolutely — just as he had been as a boy with his regiment.

Gradually, to be sure, she did his will, but without joy, and quite ungraciously. And she confessed to him that she had prayed God every day since they had been married that she might never have a child. In her small, shy heart everything of this sort had come to mean something sinful and unclean, as a result of the shameful, unnatural way she had heard the whole subject treated at school and in church; and as a result, too, of the way respectable society treats it — as if it involved something ugly. For Klaus, too, the whole thing had been smudged in school and in church. But he had a healthy nature and, like all men of will and spirit, strongly developed senses. And he had long ago shaken off all the silly ideas he had picked up, and had thus been able to enjoy his delicate fresh little wife frankly and naturally. But his timid little partner regarded the whole thing as a cross.

He had a very natural feeling that a young wife ought to be glad to have a child by the man she loves; and he hoped that everything would go better when this should come about. He hoped, too, that all her narrowness and worry would then be over, and that in their place would come the womanly breadth and serenity he so much admired. After a few months, in spite of her pitiful prayers, she became pregnant. She wept constantly, worried herself into despair, talked all the time about dying, and took pleasure in nothing. Klaus, like a joyous courageous man that feels

a need of having something to do or undertake, saw that he could be of use here, and gladly exerted himself to cheer her up on all occasions. With his joy in life and work, with his beaming, laughing eyes, he ought to have been a real inspiration. How he stroked and caressed her! But it really seemed as if his courage and ardor increased her spiritlessness.

The senses, restrained for years, but now in a measure satisfied, allowed his young manhood, as if released, to expand freely in a new feeling of responsibility and enterprise, in an ambition to look out for wife and child, to undertake tasks and duties, and to win money and honor. He liked being at the harbor when the little Swedish schooner with its cargo of boards was unloaded. And he liked being at the yards when the heavy wagons, loaded with long Pomeranian beams which had been floated down the Elbe, came up from the river. He enjoyed going around the piles and sheds with the simple contractors of the town and neighborhood. And he liked reckoning and recording the receipts and the expenditures in the office. As he sat there writing he cast long looks over toward the little house in the garden where his little wife was, his particular love and care. His father-in-law let him take full charge, confessing frankly that he was very glad to have an energetic, able partner; and in the afternoons he stayed away from the yards altogether, and busied himself in the interests of the six or seven clubs in which he was prominent.

Nevertheless, Klaus Baas soon discovered that his activities were limited. He was permitted to be a co-worker with the father-in-law, but not a co-manager. His father didn't like it when Klaus made even a very conservative change in the management, which in some respects was really out of date. Nor did he like it when Klaus pointed out that competition in the two nearest towns was making dangerous progress, nor when he proposed negotiating with larger firms, carrying a greater assortment, and establishing a branch business in a large village. Anything new was not well received by the father—it dis-

turbed his comfort. He did not resent propositions; he simply set them aside. "Let it be as it is," he said. "All this bothers me, my boy."

Above all, however, Klaus couldn't find out anything at all about the firm's capital and profits. One day he found on his desk a letter which had probably got there by mistake. In it the two sons in Berlin wrote that in their opinion certain yearly allowances which had been sent to them were not so large as they should be; in order to establish their business on a firm basis they would need a larger yearly allowance. At the time of his wedding Klaus had become very superficially acquainted with his brothers-in-law. At that time he had not been willing to admit to himself that he didn't like the two pale, slouching fellows, with their boastful airs; but now that he read the letter, he saw them again, and frankly admitted to himself that he had nothing in common with them and never would have. He told their father that these yearly allowances were pernicious in fostering in the sons idleness and lack of grip. "Ah, Klaus," the father said, laying his hand on his arm again, "don't say anything like that; you worry me, indeed you do. I can manage it, and I can and must help my children. Of course I know that their mother's head is full of notions, and that may have spoiled the boys from childhood up. But what can I do — she's their mother. I certainly can't say, 'Stop deceiving each other. Don't exaggerate so' — now can I? I'm getting along in years now, and I don't want to have any differences with my wife and children. Let things be as they are. When we two old folks are gone, you can fix it any way you like."

On some afternoons, when Klaus and his little wife had coffee together in their living-room, he was very happy. Beside her at the window were the flowers which she took such pleasure in caring for, and her pet canary twittered and chirped beside her. She had such a pretty, dainty little way of serving; and sometimes, when she was in a good humor, she chatted along in the most charming way in her thin little voice about trifling little things at home

or among the people they knew. And it was fine when they sometimes sat together in the evening, he with his big Hamburg paper, she with her lace-pillow. It was even endurable when they went over to her parents' house for supper, and sat there talking — the mother about her boys, the sister about her casket, and the father about his clubs. Then his little wife forgot her condition, and sat contentedly at her lace-making. He did not even count as entirely lost the Thursday evenings he spent at the bowling club with his father-in-law, although it was all one to him whether he or some one else was playing. Still, considering his twenty-seven years, it was something quite considerable to be immediately accepted on equal terms and looked up to by these older, distinguished people of the town.

As day after day passed, however, each one revealing only what was right before his eyes, the rosy mist with which his youth and his optimistic nature had surrounded all these new people and things gradually dissolved. He became more sober and a little bored, and went off by himself once in a while. And when he was once alone with his own soul, his judgments gradually became calmer, and what he saw did not satisfy him. He realized now that in those four summer days just after he had come home from the far East and was not yet adjusted to home, he had made a bright and beautiful picture of everything that had caught his eye — of this town, this family, and this business. He struggled with himself, for he wanted the picture to keep its rainbow colors and it did keep some of them; but in spite of all he could do, it was fading fast.

The only saving thing about it, he thought, was that his little wife did not fade with the rest. There was certainly no possibility of that. That would be horrible. She was like her mother and sister in some ways now, it was true — in a sort of moping-at-home instinct common to her family, a sort of fear of life which he would never have suspected in the charming girl he had drawn down from the mound in the cemetery. It didn't seem right to him, either, that she had no interest in books; it looked

as if nothing that had ever happened or been thought in any other time or place had any significance for her. And it was a pity she didn't like to hear him talk in his bold, enterprising way about his plans for extending the business, or about the outlook in some new undertaking, or about settling in Hamburg some day. Certainly talk of that sort startled her quite too much. He had thought that the woman that would be his wife would have to be a real comrade and partner. But mercy, he ought to consider the condition she was in ! When her time was over, and she had a healthy baby in her arms, she would stand more firmly on her feet and be a complete, healthy, gay woman.

Her time came. With great suffering, she brought into the world a healthy little girl. Her recovery was long and slow.

But she became neither happier nor more assured. She bewailed her poor health, was always worried about her baby, and seemed tolerably happy and contented only when she had her mother or sister with her, — preferably both. In spring, when the baby was old enough to be carried over the woodyard, she passed half of the day with her mother and sister, and Klaus Baas had to go there to look for her. He found her there talking quite cheerfully, drinking coffee, and busy with the lace-making. The mother would be talking about the two sons — how one of them, even when he was an apprentice, had found out a cheating bookkeeper, and thus saved his chief from a bankruptcy scandal. And how her other boy had been on the point of marrying a beautiful and immensely wealthy girl, and had been prevented by the intrigues of a false friend. Then with gleaming eyes and more and more emphatic words, the older sister revealed to them the mysteries of the casket. A rich man with whom she had got acquainted during her married life had willed it to her with half a million in it ; but this man's nephew refused to tell her where the casket and the key were. Klaus's pale thin little wife talked about her friends, spinning out their life histories in her high-pitched little

voice, and brooding over every detail. Sometimes they had a visitor—an aunt or distant relative, or a neighbor who carried the town gossip from house to house. When Klaus Baas came in, his little wife looked up at him appealingly, as if to say, "You aren't going to disturb us, are you? We're so comfortable." Noticing that they all became quieter and a little embarrassed when he appeared, he soon left. And he struggled against the realization that the sweet and beautiful image of his wife was fading too.

He saw that there was a real danger in the way the three women continually moped together. So he lay in wait, and one afternoon, when he caught the father and mother alone, he talked to them about it. He told them that once lately, when he happened to be passing by their oldest daughter's window, he had seen her looking very strange and wild, burrowing in her bureau drawer in a perfect frenzy. He feared the worst, he said. But they refused to listen to him. Putting her hands over her ears, the mother declared that she simply couldn't endure such talk; and for the first time the father became really angry, regarding the suggestion as an insult.

Klaus Baas went over home to look for his wife, but she was not to be found. At last he discovered her sitting in the arbor in which he had won her, in those lovely summer days, two years before. He was still excited from the talk with her father and mother; and he was keenly worried about his future and hers. He felt an urgent need of separating her more from her family; and so for the first time he told her coldly and clearly what he thought of the whole situation. He told her that he had no opinion at all of the two brothers in Berlin, and that they were eating up the profits of her father's business, to what extent he did not accurately know. Anyway, the result was that he was working for them and not for her and himself and their child. He considered this moping in the living-room every day, this continual talking about all kinds of wild fancies, extremely imprudent, for the older sister especially, but for her, too. There wasn't a word of truth in that casket tale. His spirit was aroused, and he tried

to make her see it all as plainly as he could. And in trying to make her see the situation, it became clearer to him as he talked. He shuddered again more violently than ever at what he saw. Finally he stopped, quite overcome.

During his emphatic recital she had begun to play with the baby sitting in the sand in front of her. She took it up on her lap, cleaned its sandy little hands, and so on. When he finally stopped, she said in her dull, spiritless little way, "What does all that amount to, Klaus? What have I to do with it? Suppose what you say about my brothers is true? Suppose they do get some of my father's money every year—they're his children, aren't they? And why shouldn't Flora talk about the casket? You just worry me and upset me, Klaus. You do it continually—if not with what you say, then with the way you look. I'm absolutely afraid of you. Mercy, Klaus, things have been going on all right all these years. Father's still here looking out for things. Well, then, why should trouble come all at once? Bad luck doesn't drop out of a clear sky."

He gave a vexed laugh at her way of putting it all. "Martje," he said, "it won't do for you to keep away all your life from realities and anxieties. Just for my sake, try once more to see the situation as it is—as a grave and dangerous one."

She caressed several times the yellow head of the baby at her breast, and looked down on the ground with big, dreary eyes. At last she said dully, "You oughtn't to torment me with things like this, Klaus—you really oughtn't. It doesn't do you any good to tell them to me. It just makes me sad, and cross at you. And I've been angry with you so often already, just because you're always thinking of things like these. Even if you don't say so, your eyes show it. You're always so hard and so strenuous—and so very different from us."

Klaus shook his head hopelessly, got up without a word, and went back to work, his face pale and quiet.

From this day on he withdrew more and more from the family circle. Many an evening and many a Sunday he



sat alone over a book in the little room, with its stiff new furniture and its many knickknacks and tidies, of which his wife was so fond. Sometimes she sat with him in silence, but much oftener she was over at her parents' house. In the three years that succeeded he read a great deal, with a sort of passionate zeal and enthusiasm. He had put away the illusions of youth now; he was no longer interested in high ideals and fanciful conceptions of joy and sorrow. He did not think now of reading Schiller and other great poets; indeed, he scorned all books of that sort. His idealistic, imaginative soul, tormented and deceived, confronted, as it was now, by hard reality, longed for an understanding of the sober truth.

It was not until these years when he was taking no part in the life of the little town, and when he was almost thirty, that he gained a broader and more sufficient knowledge of the world and its phenomena. He sat long over biographies, books of travel, natural histories, commercial treatises, and a huge history of the world. And he followed intently the course of events in the large Hamburg newspapers. With the aid of a big lexicon, he tried to fill in all the gaps that invariably occur in the course of such wide reading. Then he quietly pondered how he could still adjust his life and raise it to a higher plane.

Late in the autumn he was offered the position of manager of a well-established, but somewhat sluggish Farmers' Bank. By the impending establishment of a new bank in a larger neighboring town, its position was endangered, and it hoped to recover its old standing through the energy of young Klaus Baas. Klaus knew, however, that the new bank had behind it the people who were most important financially and who were marked by the most enterprising intelligence; and so, to his father-in-law's great amazement and vexation, he refused the offer of the old bank and worked for and obtained the managership of the new one. He threw himself into the work with the enthusiasm of a man expending all his energy and interest on a still struggling enterprise. Moreover, it was work he was doing on his own account. In the course of the

winter he became generally known as a good worker and a keen judge. He won the confidence of the board of directors to such a degree that in the spring he was intrusted with extra commissions. Under wise direction, the bank really grew, until it needed more than ever the services of men of experience and business capacity, for the directors themselves were chiefly countrymen. Since Klaus had made good in his lower capacity, and since his energy and discretion pleased them, he was soon made a member of the bank council. In this way he both won personal recognition and distinction, and also realized from the work a tidy little sum, which he left in operation at the bank. He slowly withdrew a little from the wood business, and secretly kept before him the idea of getting an interest, by means of this money, in some sort of mercantile business in Hamburg. In this way, he thought, he could remove himself and his little wife from her family. With this in view, he went oftener to Hamburg, where both his mother and the bank business often called him, went through the Exchange, looked in at certain offices where he knew people, and in general kept in touch with all his acquaintances. He was on the lookout for an opportunity which his personality and his little capital might help him to embrace.

His father-in-law remained well disposed. "Are you trying to get rich in ten years?" he asked laughingly. "You don't stay with us any more, and you don't come to the bowling club. You just dig and dig at that work of yours. Do you call that living? You ought to come over for coffee now and then. The women like to have a man around once in a while, and we ought always to be good to the women, you know."

"Well, father," said Klaus, defending himself, "that's all true, but it's pretty hard to listen and not put in an objection now and then. Have Flora examined by a doctor and send her to some institution. And don't send the boys any more money. You're only ruining them."

His father raised a warning hand. "You mustn't say those things, my boy," he said pleasantly. "Don't try to

paint such horrors. Don't try to worry us with all those ideas. And above all, spare your little wife."

Klaus gave it up again.

And one day what he had foretold about Flora happened. It came one evening, after two steady weeks of dull, gloomy February weather — of the sort that depresses a sensitive person excessively. Klaus, sitting in the little private office he had fitted up in the house for the bank business, was busily engaged in directing the young assistant he had been obliged to employ. His wife and the baby were, as usual, over at her father's house. Suddenly the servant girl from there appeared, frightened to death, and told Klaus breathlessly that the older daughter was behaving, oh, so queer, and that he was to hurry over at once.

Klaus jumped up and ran over. He found his wife and her father and mother huddled together in a corner behind the mother's lace-pillow, staring in speechless terror toward the door opposite, which led into the father and mother's bedroom. From Flora's room, which opened out of that, came the sound of loud singing. Klaus at once passed through the bedroom into Flora's room. He found the sorry little figure clothed in a chemise, sitting on the edge of the bed. She was sewing some broad gold-colored lace around the hem of her black Sunday dress. In front of her was an old chest covered with cloth, which had probably been her dolls' house when she was a little girl. It was filled with all kinds of sorry shiny stuff, piled in topsyturvy, — cheap trinkets, little canisters, a few silver things, and so on. In a loud free voice, which contrasted strangely enough with her usual restrained manner, she began to sing, "When the swallows homeward fly," as if she were sitting alone in a big green meadow. As her needle flew, she kept time with her head. She had combed her thin, gray-streaked hair loosely behind, child fashion. In the whole picture Klaus could see so much pure childish simplicity, beside the plainly evident insanity, that he felt an immediate pity. "Well, old girl," he said cheerfully, "what are you doing there? Feeling pretty good?"

She looked up. "Hello, Klaus," she said cordially. "Hello, hello! Well, I've got the letter. Here, read it. I haven't time."

She handed him the letter, which she had plainly written herself. According to it the casket was waiting for her in a hotel in Hamburg. The signature was a grotesque, illegible scrawl.

"Who's going along?" she asked. "Are you? The others are all so queer. They haven't got the spirit to realize that everything's changed. Klaus! You come along with me, old boy. You're the lute-player."

"Of course I'm coming along," said Klaus. "Why, of course I am. Make yourself as pretty as you can, Flora. I'll go order a carriage."

He went out and told the terror-stricken family that the father must go at once to tell the family doctor how things were, and then, if the doctor didn't object, he must order a carriage at once, so that Klaus could get Flora to the asylum in Schleswig that day. The two women shrieked and put their hands over their ears, begging him pitifully to see them to the house in the garden, where they would stay till the sick woman was gone. He nodded, opened the door, and took them out. The father, too, refused to see his daughter again. If he did, he said, he would never be able to sleep.

An hour later, Klaus was riding beside the sick woman in a closed carriage up the main road to Schleswig. Her insanity had grown rapidly worse. Now she thought the little upholstered chest was the casket. She burrowed with both hands among the shiny trinkets, talked and sang loudly, overjoyed at going to Hamburg, where they were expecting her. Klaus Baas sat beside her, now listening to her wild, excited talk, now looking out the rattling window across the moonlit fields. His thoughts were not pleasant ones. Well, now it had gone as far as this! And the trouble would not be disposed of when this poor thing had been taken to Schleswig. Five or six hundred marks would have to be sent there every year now. And then there were the two brothers-in-law. Who knew what

news from them might be on the way north from Berlin, even now while he was riding eastward over field and heath with their mad sister? One of them was married now, and had children, who would call him uncle, and would want him to help them out some day. Their father would not be able to do anything for them. The sick woman certainly got her disease from her mother. And the father was a slipshod, weak man, afraid to face realities. Well, the children had inherited that too. The whole family was diseased—worm-eaten—decadent! A horror came over him. Decadent! Then that was what decadent meant. He had often read the word, and had often used it himself, but without a real conception of its meaning; now, in a moment, the monster was right at his feet. He had married into a decadent, degenerating family. And his little wife? Well, his little wife was a true member of this family. And his child, the little girl, was just like her mother. She had the same calm, drawling voice—not a bit of gay pride or cheery spirit. . . . The sick woman put her arm around his shoulder and sang a dance melody in her thin voice. The moon, hanging very low in the sky, sent its light far over the country, and beamed through the rattling window. Klaus Baas had time to reflect.

And as he pondered, he withdrew very far from the people to whom he now belonged. And he withdrew from all men—for it is only by so doing that a man becomes fully himself—and standing alone, he scanned people and himself, his own heart and his own way of life. It was certainly true that he himself, a Baas, and his father's own son—had always thought and acted too quickly, too facilely, with an imagination that ran away with itself. Besides this, his school and church teaching had led him astray. What had they held up to him? Nothing but fairy tales, heroic deeds, the highest morality, idealism—cloud stuff, all of it. There had been two gospels, one the Saviour's, the other Schiller's. But there had been nothing at all about the experience which comes to us after our school days are over in the form of a

passionate need ; nothing about the real earthy troubled nature of the body and of the soul. Nothing whatever about race, sex, procreation, heredity. Not a bit of real true knowledge of life anywhere. . . . "What did you say, child ? You think the bells will ring when we get to Hamburg ? I hope you're right, my child ! But old Michael's iron head only shakes when it wants to."

"Oh, how soundly and proudly I might be standing up in the world, with a strong companion at my side, and healthy, handsome children growing up around me ! Hurrah ! I'd like to jump out of the carriage and run across fields and fight with all the world and with all the ghosts from the graves and vaults. And here I am, bound and imprisoned. I shall have to live with these people always — take care of the old folks, and bury them, look after and support the two sons in Berlin and their children ; and have around me forever this narrow, timid little wife. I'll have to be head of a hospital as long as I live ! There they were, crouching together behind the lace-pillow. They were afraid of this poor little sick thing. — Go on and sing, Flora, old girl. Come on, do you know that song,

Anna Susanna, get up and make the fire —  
Ah, my dear mother, but wood is so dear !

That's what the girls used to sing when we played under the trees in the churchyard."

"No," said Flora, "I want to sing

It was on Jutland's meadows  
Upon the Little Belt."

"Well, that's a good song, too," said Klaus. "Begin it, then."

Heretofore, he had been far too easy in doing what the family wanted. He would not do it any more. He would separate from them. From now on, in the bold assurance that he was the healthy one and that his affairs were the more considerable, he would go his own way ; and he would inspire his little wife to go with him. That was the only way in which it would be possible to make her a

person of his kind. He must and he would help her through. In spite of everything, she was his dear little wife.

Toward midnight he asked the coachman whether it would not be well to turn in at the next tavern to feed the horses and get a sip of coffee. The gray old coachman, who had made this same sinister trip many times, said that they would soon come to a good inn. A little while afterward they drove through a long, straggling village where everybody was asleep, stopped in front of an inn, and knocked.

The landlady, a nice-looking woman, scantily clad, came to the door at once. Klaus Baas went up to her and told her in a low voice what he wanted. She nodded sympathetically. "I'm glad we were still awake," she said. "My niece is visiting me. She was talking on so entertainingly that we forgot to go to sleep." Going to the carriage she said to Flora, "Come now, you shall have a nice cup of coffee."

The sick woman stopped her singing. "Don't be so unceremonious, my good woman, if you please," she said haughtily. "You are addressing a princess."

"Well, now," said the tall landlady, with a world of pleasantness and good humor in her voice, "I didn't know that you are a princess. Then won't you please get out and have a cup of coffee and get your feet warm, princess?"

The little sick woman got out of the carriage with great dignity, still carefully clasping her casket, and went into the house. The tall landlady followed her, looking very grave. Inside, in the low room, with its shiny, polished furniture, she made Flora sit down by the stove, and she put a cup of coffee in front of her. Klaus Baas sat down beside her. Then the landlady poured out a cup for herself, too, but sat with it at the next table beside the driver. "It isn't fitting that I should sit at table with a princess," she said. The warm air of the room made Flora tired, and she was soon drowsing.

In a little while a tall, handsome girl came in, the

youthful image of the landlady, with the same full, regular face and natural composure of expression and movement. She was fastening her waist as she came in. She looked curiously at the guests, and went over to the coffee-pot.

"A handsome creature, landlady," said Flora, looking up.

"Alas, yes, princess," said the landlady, "but she is a good for nothing."

The handsome creature gave the princess a puzzled look, and looked in quiet inquiry into Klaus Baas's face. Becoming curious, Flora asked, "What's the matter with her — is she a strumpet?"

"No," said the landlady, "but she's rather downright, and, well, — she goes pretty far. She's an audacious thing, princess."

"Has the girl a trade?" the sick woman went on condescendingly. "I have just come into my rights and my fortune, of which I have up to this time been deprived. I need a maid."

"Oh, my goodness," the landlady answered, "she wouldn't do for that. She smashes absolutely everything. Besides, she has a trade already. She's a smith."

"A smith?" Flora said arrogantly. "How can she be? A smith's hands are black."

"She's a goldsmith," the landlady answered.

"Ah," cried Flora, in a burst of joy, "then she can do me a favor." She opened the little box, hunted around in it, and took out several poor little trinkets, a pair of ear-rings, a necklace, and several little pins. She needed a coronet, she said, laying the sorry trifles on the table in front of her.

Now, at last, the girl realized what was the matter with the guest. She cast at Klaus Baas a horrified glance, which said plainly, "Can this be your wife, you strong, handsome fellow?" Then with her eyes full of respectful sympathy, she sat down across from Flora. She trumped up a fine, long, careful description of how the coronet ought to be made, and once in a while as she talked she



turned her compassionate eyes on Klaus Baas. Finally she got up with an air of determination, and went into the next room, where they heard her working with the straps and fastenings of a trunk. She came back with a simple hoop of gold, prettily twisted and buckled. Laying it on the table in front of Flora, she said, "That's what I've made."

Flora clutched it eagerly. "I shall take it with me," she said to Klaus Baas; "pay for it for me." And she put on the hoop, which contrasted strangely enough with her disordered gray hair and her haggard face.

Klaus Baas was embarrassed, but the handsome girl nodded to him behind Flora's back, and said casually, in a low tone, "It won't be needed till next week. We're going to have a little carnival on Shrove Tuesday — it will be all right."

Flora must have seen that something was passing between them, and said, very gracious now that she was so adorned, "You two go well together, Klaus. You ought to have a wife like that. My, what a handsome bosom she has, and what magnificent shoulders. And you've both got eyes like deer. I wouldn't object to your marrying. Hurry up and marry her, Klaus. She won't freeze you out."

"Well," the landlady said, "she'd do it in a minute, that's sure, for she's fairly crazy about men. But he has a wife already, as I see by the ring on his hand."

"Oh, that doesn't hurt," Flora said. "Let him have one more."

"Well," said the landlady again, "it certainly wouldn't be such a terrible thing for some men to have two wives and some to have none. And it's the same with women. But when I said that to my pastor not long ago, he thought I was crazy."

"Crazy?" said Flora, contemptuously, tugging the hoop farther down on her head; "you're no more crazy than I am. But pastors try to settle everything in one and the same way. I suppose we aren't all hatched out just alike, are we?"

Klaus Baas rose and reminded her that they must go. Flora rose and tripped along in front of him, followed by the landlady. Klaus Baas looked around at the handsome girl, who was looking at him with big, questioning eyes. "She certainly isn't your wife?" she asked in a low voice.

"No," said Klaus.

"Thank God!" she said, looking at him with evident joy. "Your wife is healthy?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," he said.

"Oh, I'm glad," she said, absolutely without embarrassment.

As she stood there close to him in the narrow hallway, Klaus looked straight into her glowing eyes. "Are you as much interested in me as that?" he said, with some emotion.

She met his glance valiantly, although a slight flush spread over her cheeks. "Oh, I just mean — you certainly ought to have a strong healthy wife. Otherwise —"

"Otherwise what?" he said.

She drew back a little toward the wall. "Oh, because," she said, superb in her tempting beauty, "otherwise I would make you forget your wife."

He looked at her with a sudden overmastering passion. "What your aunt said is true," he said; "you are pretty downright and pretty audacious, do you know it? But I'm glad I met you," and he held out his hand.

She seemed to have shrunk a little. She stood there silent, almost overcome by his handshake and his look. Then she went ahead and held the light for them to get into the carriage.

And now he was sitting again beside the mad woman, who was always either burrowing in her box, or raving excitedly about her wild fancies, or asking distrustful questions. Again the broad fields and dark houses lay in the moonlight. And again the moonlight came in the window.

Klaus could not tear his thoughts away from the simple brown room in which that girl's eyes had been like great

glowing lights. Now *there* were two healthy, strong, energetic people. What buoyancy showed in their shoulders, breasts, and hips! How kindly and wisely they had acted in that strange situation — just as if they knew and accepted quietly all the manifold variety of nature; as if, indeed, they were a part of great and wide nature herself. It would certainly be a pleasure to spend a day walking with her; what a stimulating companion she would make — for she is always cheerful, she sees everything, feels everything. She plays on her soul all the tunes conceived between heaven and earth. What in the world would she say if she were to look in on the family at the woodyard? She would shrug her supple shoulders in that handsome way and say, “These are just about half people.” If I told her how they cowered behind the lace-pillow last evening, her fine eyes would be full of contempt and scornful pity. And if she were to see my little wife, she would say, “A true child of this family — and she isn’t suited to him!”

She wasn’t suited to him! And she had pleased him so much four years ago — pleased him beyond anything! How could that have been possible? He had been so immature then, in spite of his twenty-six years. He had known a little about business — but nothing about life. With the stupid idealism of a young German, who knows nothing about real nature, he had built up a fanciful picture about her and about everything else. Well, the picture had not been a true one. At that time he had been trying to find something pretty, delicate, and timid; he was to be the helper and the hero. In Martje there was not a bit of the power of race that of itself develops into strength. She had no fervor — no clarity. She was a very tiny kingdom — too small for him. He had not realized that some day he would be a strong, broad man, — a man of will and of action, a man that needed a strong, broad wife, a strong, energetic, perhaps a bit scornful companion, a goodly proud kingdom. And his child was like its mother: it had even been conceived and accepted quite without joy.

But what a girl that had been, standing there against the wall in the entry, conquered by his eyes, and nevertheless conquering him! He knew how she would be in the hours of love. On her wedding night she would not be as Martje Ruhland had been four years ago. How she had stood there—and looked at him! Not boldly, not wantonly—no, no—but like a fresh, healthy, sound person. I—a person like you! Dear beautiful wife that you would be! It would be wonderful to have a wife like that to rule over. It would be a constant happy struggle, always renewed, a continual good fight and victory. And that sort of battle didn't break a man—either in soul or body.

Flora was leaning more heavily upon him. After a little more singing, "My prince and my lord," she fell asleep in his arms, the gold coronet presented by the handsome girl all awry in her disorderly, thin hair.

In the damp gray dawn the carriage rolled heavily into the yard of the asylum.

Late that afternoon Klaus Baas reached home again, and went straight to his private office. He found his little wife sitting bolt upright at her lace making in the lamp-light. Her face looked hard and cold, though her eyes were swollen with weeping. He told her briefly how things had gone. Amazed that she did not look up at him, he asked, "What's the matter, Martje?"

"Aunt Hanne and Frau Biedermann say you're to blame for Flora's sickness," she answered, in an unusually cold voice; "and mother thinks so too—she thinks you'll drive us all crazy."

"What—I?" Klaus answered, tapping his chest, perfectly astounded.

"Yes, you, with your everlasting restlessness, and your planning and wanting things different—you made her restless and queer."

Speechless and wholly disheartened, Klaus sat down on the opposite side of the table, stared straight ahead, and tried to collect himself. In a few minutes he broke out

impulsively, "Oh, you people! So you throw off on other folks the blame for being such a pitiful, incapable lot! Your father can't get up early in the morning. Your mother can't bear to look at a sick girl. Your brothers can't support themselves. *You* can't get along without being over home half the time. The baby can't manage to eat its food. There's something every one of you can't do. And what of me? I can do anything — unless it's dancing the tight rope. I can do anything that's straight and wise and brave. I can get up before cockerow; I can help the sick in trouble; I can earn money; and I can live at the North Pole, if I have to. I can do anything. And more than that: I could kill any man that keeps me from living in a way that's straight and sensible and amounts to something. I tell you, Martje Ruhland, I'm going to go my own way. And you are either going right along with me as a real comrade, or you're going to stay back there altogether. I'm going to own my own soul."

Martje's little hands dropped from the lace-pillow. Her haughtiness and anger had vanished altogether. "I've always known," she wept, "that you were better than all of us. You don't need to tell me that. That's why I've been afraid of you from the very beginning. Even in the night when you're asleep I'm afraid of you. 'I wonder what plans he's making in his dreams,' I say to myself. And I don't want to have any more children, ever. I hate that more than anything. And that will always stand between us."

Touched by her piteous little moan, and eager to help her and himself, Klaus said gently: "But you're different from the rest, Martje. Really, you are more alive and straighter than they are."

She shook her head. "No," she said, with a look of helpless distress on her pretty little face, "no, no, I'm not different. I know very well that you're still good to me because you're thinking, 'Soon I can just raise the lid and find a lot of nice things inside!' But you're wrong, Klaus. There's nothing inside that you want. I'm the

real child of my parents, and we two will never understand each other. And it's horrible — for I love you so in spite of everything.”

The tears fell fast on the fine, delicate lace she was working on. She looked so unspeakably pathetic, so thoroughly wretched, when she cried all over her little face. Klaus petted her, feeling intensely sorry for her, and dried her tears. “There, there,” he said, “hush now — what I said was too hard. Everything will still be all right. And we two now — didn't we begin our married life with the biggest kind of love? See here now — we must begin to understand each other, really. Just trust me, and hold fast to me, Martje. I'll bring you safe through life!”

But she shook her head, and refused to be comforted.

## CHAPTER XVIII

IT would have been a good thing, perhaps, if she had had more children — a son, say, like Klaus in looks and temperament ; but she had only the one child, to which she gave a mournful little affection. Early in the morning she went over with the child to sit for hours by her sick mother's bed, listening to her and to her aunt's idle talk, while the baby was playing at the table.

Klaus begged her to take the child out into the fields, or to let it play with the other children in the garden, and urged her to get acquainted with some nice women and girls. She did what he asked, but in an artificial sort of way ; she soon had one objection or another to them — they struck her as too free and easy, too outspoken, or too noisy ; and then it was all over, and she was spending her time as before, sitting at her mother's bedside or at her lace making. For a long time Klaus Baas hadn't been able to endure the light tapping of the wooden bobbins ; and the delicate cobweb that she was always making had long ago come to seem to him a symbol of her whole frail, restricted life.

If he had been a superficial, selfish man, with as slight spiritual needs as most men have, he would have let his wife live along in the way she wanted, as did one of the city officials, for example, — a capable, serious man, whose duties often took him out into the country, and who seldom saw his wife to speak to. He was always in his office or driving around the country ; she was always in the kitchen or with the children or visiting friends ; and both of them seemed satisfied with their own circle. Klaus Baas was often called away on business, too ; he had to hunt up customers through the country, and go to the neighboring towns and to Hamburg for the bank ; and

each day he tried to study out the significance of that day's business. When he got home in the evenings, however, he wanted to find a real companion, who would share in all the workings of his active mind. What he found was a little woman sitting like a spider in her little web, looking at him with great alien eyes. It is true that she liked to be asked often about her mother and her aunt, and about what she was doing now and how it was getting along; and sometimes she even liked to be told that their whole enterprise would end some day in a heavy financial loss or some other sort of trouble. Once, when he happened to tell her how much he had cleared for himself that day, she said indifferently, in a depressed, dubious tone, "We always have managed to live, Klaus, and who knows whether all this is a good thing after all." Then a fit of anger seized him, and he scolded her, telling her that she ought to pull herself together, and not let herself be influenced by those old women, but stand by him and his work. Then she cried, and said that he was always, always wanting her to be different from what she was, and that this eternal antagonism was killing her.

A series of depressing days followed. She stayed with him in the evenings, but sat taciturn and gloomy, working at her little lace-pillow. Only after several days did she become a little more cheerful. And then she went back to her mother's.

So a definite character gradually developed in her, that grew firmer and more clear-cut in the steady conflict. But this very character, complaining, irritable, petty, suspicious, was exactly the opposite of the character Klaus Baas had and wanted to have. And thus gradually their incompatibility took definite form. Several weeks afterward, when he blazed out, irritated at the misery of their life together, she fell to crying, in unspeakable misery. She said that she knew perfectly well that he was stronger and abler than she was, and that he was not happy with her, and couldn't be; it tortured her to realize this, but she couldn't change herself; she wasn't fit for anything but sitting with her mother. She wept as if her heart



would break, and her pretty little face was so pitifully distorted that Klaus pleaded with her in every way he could, in his effort to console her. Her recognition of the situation and her despair gave him new hope; but after a few days she fell back into her old rut again. The same thing happened over and over again; gradually these scenes, when he was scornful and angry, and she was mournful, came regularly every three or four weeks, as if they were definitely appointed and arranged.

A man and his wife, who were about as old as Klaus and his wife, and had been married about as long, came to live in the city. The husband, an able scholar, was a teacher in the high school. He was very much taken with the young business man's wide-awake air, had heard a great deal about his ability, and hoped to find in him something to offset his own bookishness. His cheerful young wife wanted him to broaden his life in this way, and she herself liked to go around with the young merchant, who carried his head so high. Klaus's pretty, rather sour little wife they had to take in too. They came in as if by chance one evening, and had a good talk on everything under the sun. Klaus Baas was glad to hear something again that "got the world along a little," as he put it; he didn't mind having this woman with the shining brown eyes cut into their talk now and then, with much the air of a frisky puppy disporting among wise old hens, and he was satisfied to have his wife sit quietly by. So things went on for several weeks.

But one evening Martje said that she had rather not go to the teacher's house that evening, because she had a headache. When he urged her to go, she said that she didn't like that woman. And when he pressed her, it finally came out that she had laid it up against the woman that she had never asked how her sick mother was. And besides, her mother wasn't at all well that evening, and — finally — she understood so little of what they talked about. She begged him to go there alone, however, for she didn't want to spoil his pleasure. As she passed him, she stroked his head with her soft little hand.

Klaus shook his head and sat there stupidly, his courage completely gone. Seeing how sad he was, and growing anxious, she finally offered, in her mournful little voice, to go along after all. She hadn't supposed, she said, that he cared so much whether she went along.

He stared at her, not knowing what to say. "You didn't know I cared, Martje?" he said. "You didn't know I cared? Oh, Martje, just tell me, please, what share I have of your life! Are you my wife? Only unwillingly, if at all. Are you my housekeeper? We've a good maid that attends to all that; things run along without your help. Are you my comrade? You certainly aren't; you don't want to share my interests, and you don't do it. Have we even a child together? No, the child is all yours; you are bringing it up altogether according to your ideas and your mother's. What have we in common still? Well, we still eat our meals together, that's about all!" He got up and went to the window, twisting at his wedding ring, and said in utter misery, "What a life! What a life!"

She began to cry, as usual, so bitterly that he could not stand it long, and turned back to her. She was sitting there, her hands laid on the table in front of her, with such deep grief in her tear-washed face that pity seized him. He drew her down on the sofa beside him and put his arm around her, as she sat there, shaking with sobs.

She went on complaining and weeping mournfully, her delicate little face fixed and set, as if she were staring into the burning misery to come.

"I know," she wailed, "that some day we'll separate, and yet—I love you. But I cannot, cannot, be anything but what I am. And you cannot be anything but what you are. You love me too, I know."

Klaus made light of the idea of separating. "Don't talk of such a thing!" he said. "Separate! why, you say yourself we love each other; so why should we separate? I'll never leave you; I'd rather die! I've sworn to stand by you all my life; and I'll keep my word!"

She held her hand over her mouth, to keep back her

sobs. Staring fixedly, and crying steadily, she said, "Oh, yes, our intentions are good — we both mean well, Klaus ; that isn't what is wrong. It's that our natures are so different that we are always hurting each other's feelings. Just think of it a minute : thirty or forty years more of this ! It was simply childish for us to get married. We didn't know each other at all then. We didn't even know ourselves. It is only in the last few years that we have really become mature ; but unluckily we have grown away from each other. You have been getting stronger, and more free and venturesome ; and I have been getting more frail and timid all the time. That's our whole trouble."

He was surprised at her saying all this, but determined not to admit that she was right. "What use is there in talking about our natures !" he said. "We come from the same part of the country, we believe in the same God, we both want to do what is right ; the devil is in it if we can't stand each other. It's only that we must both take it more seriously. And besides, we'll both get older and steadier."

She shook her pretty head. "You're mistaken, Klaus. You and I don't feel, why, we don't even notice, that we are hurting each other with every word we say, with our way of looking at things ; we act naturally and involuntarily, and do what seems right and good to us. The trouble is, that what one of us thinks is good and right, the other calls wrong. It's true we were born less than six miles apart ; but we are as different as if one of us had been born in Lapland and the other in India. If I knew enough, I could say what I mean better."

Her hopelessness made Klaus more thoughtful. Casting around for some salvation from their misery, he said, "The worst thing about it all is your family. Why did we ever squat down here so close to them ! Well, sooner or later the bank will open an office in Hamburg ; perhaps I might take that place. Or I could hunt some other work there. Come to Hamburg with me !"

She twisted her handkerchief around her fingers and cried violently. "No, Klaus, I — I can't leave my mother

— she is getting old — and perhaps my sister may come back — and — we're so unlike, Klaus, we don't belong together — you're like a wolf, Klaus, and I'm like a little rabbit!"

She laid her little blond head on his breast and cried bitterly. "Oh, it's such a great misfortune that we love each other — or at least that I love you; but I do believe I could stand it better if you were only far away from me, if I knew that you were happy, and if I were living along quietly in my own way with the child. You'll never be happy this way, Klaus, and neither will I."

The room was getting dark. Seeing no comfort anywhere, Klaus gazed out over her shaking head. In wild, angry grief, he thought, "Are we both possessed? Don't we both want to do what is right? Isn't she reasonable and well-disposed? I can't live with her, can't I? Nor she with me? And that's to be the end, is it? After those four blissful summer days! It's wild! I won't have it!"

After this talk things went well for several weeks. They met each other halfway. But this spirit of concession was forced and artificial, because it went against their inmost nature, and one day they got back to the same old place again. One of their neighbors had got her excited about whether Klaus could resist the temptations he was exposed to in his confidential position at the bank. Klaus raged because his own wife doubted whether he was worthy of trust — a merchant's highest honor and most essential qualification. At first she was altogether surprised that he resented her "warning," as she awkwardly called it; then she cried a great deal, and was horribly miserable again. And so they lived along together, depressed and silent.

Several days later, before they had got over the depression of this fresh quarrel, Martje's oldest brother came home unexpectedly, after having avoided his parents' house for over ten years. He was about forty years old, and was kindly, prosperous, and assured — very different from his brothers and sisters. During the first two days

he sat in his mother's room or walked for hours with his sister and the baby around the garden, where the first spring blossoms were coming out. Then at last he went into the office to see his brother-in-law. Klaus received him coolly and cautiously.

The two men lived together for three or four days, attended to business together, and talked about everything that came up. Each made the discovery that the other was a man of common sense and honor. The great difference between them was that on this foundation of common sense and honesty the easy-going wood dealer wanted to build up little more than a good living and a reputation of being an honest and agreeable sort of fellow, while Klaus Baas wanted to build a tower that would reach the skies.

On the fourth day of the brother's visit, the young married couple invited them to use the fine spring day for a little excursion into the wood on the lonely hills on the heath. It was several hours' trip from town. Klaus Baas was immensely pleased; he hoped that this big brother was having a good influence on the little woman, and making things go right with her again. And when it was settled that her brother was going along, she was glad too, for his easy-going, quiet, limited way accorded well with her own.

They took the train to the next station and then walked along the broad sandy road to the wood. The wide road ran on through the wood, and the sun shone warmly in upon it. The sunshine and the fresh green on fir, birch, and hazel brush on both sides of the road made them all feel gay.

The young teacher, eager to learn, as usual, began to ask the brother questions about his business and his life in general. The brother talked along easily about heavy Danish horses, and unreliable contractors, and about several hard sledge trips through the pine woods of Dalecarlia. He passed easily, however, from descriptions of his business to pleasant talk about his holidays. In a sociable way he talked at length about what he liked to drink at

night, and about his neat little household, which was managed by an elderly widow. "If you weren't married, Martje," he said to his sister, who was walking ahead of him with the teacher's pretty wife, "if you weren't married, I'd take you along with me now, and the baby, too. You'd like that. My establishment's always quiet and run on the minute. It's slow and comfortable, and the money's on the table at the stroke of twelve on the first of every month."

His sister turned to him and nodded vehemently, in a way in which she had never assented to any sentiment Klaus Baas expressed.

They strolled along, the two women ahead, and the three men behind them, all listening cheerfully to the chat of Klaus's brother-in-law. Suddenly the teacher's wife, who had been running her foot playfully through the sand, turned up a horseshoe. She picked it up, crying gayly, "That means good luck," and giving a long, happy look at her husband, with whom — intoxicated by the first day of spring — she had agreed that very morning that now they should have another child. Then she cast down her eyes and blushed. She tried to press the horseshoe over her dainty round shoulder, and, taking her companion's arm again, went on.

After this little happening, Klaus's wife became silent, and walked on drearily, with downcast eyes. Klaus saw it and went up to her. He took her arm, hesitated a moment, and then walked on with her alone. Full of pity for her silence and depression, and touched by her dainty girlish beauty, he put his arm around her shoulders as they walked, and told her cheerily that things would be all right even yet. In this way they got about a stone's throw from the others, and were at last quite alone at a turn of the road. She listened to him with tearful eyes, nestling close to him. In a sweet, shy, conscious way, she was feeling with her foot in the sand, when it struck something hard, and a bent piece of iron appeared. With a low, pitiful cry of joy, she bent down and picked it up. It was only a piece of a broken hearth-ring.

Bursting into hot tears, she dropped it and hid her face.

He tried to console her, but he felt discouraged himself. He couldn't help thinking how fitting her find was, after all. He felt desperate and harried. "Here I am," he thought, "shut out from all the joys of life, from even the noblest of all, the doing of worthy and virtuous deeds — all because I was foolish for a space of four days, six years ago. And here I am, bound for a lifetime! And so is she — she's absolutely wretched and dreary." He looked down at her as she walked along in silent misery, full of contrast to the beautiful springtime, her tearful eyes looking straight ahead in her usual touching way. "We simply torment each other," Klaus said to himself. "The poor dear little thing!"

When they got home and had had supper, Klaus's brother-in-law took him into the office. "I'm going to leave tomorrow," he said, "and I want to speak to you first about my sister. Since her father renounces his right to speak in this matter — and in many others — I, as her oldest brother, have the right to do it. She wrote me a long letter about this, and it was only on this account that I forced myself to come back home again. It isn't my way — it's quite contrary to it, in fact — to meddle in other folks' business; but in this case it's both my right and my duty."

Klaus Baas, sitting on his office stool, raised his head proudly. Then he suddenly recalled how helpless and discouraged he had felt only three hours before, as they had been walking along the sandy road in the wood. He remembered too that she herself had called in her brother as counsellor.

"Go on, brother," he said.

"Well," the brother-in-law said, "she's written me the whole story. And I've questioned her about it here for hours at a time, and I've talked to mother, too. So I know pretty well how things are. Now, as far as you're concerned — well, of course she's spoken about you, too, and in such a way that I can talk to you plainly and without any bad feeling. I've been studying you for several

days, too, and I know pretty well what kind of a fellow you are. Well, I've just told my little sister what seems to me to be the only thing to do about all this — to separate."

Klaus Baas started up, thoroughly shaken. "That is awful!" he said dully. "It's dreadful. Things aren't as bad as that."

His brother nodded his big head. "I spent the first twenty-five years of my life here at home," he said. "Thanks to these sober eyes of mine, which I inherited from my mother's mother, I at least came to know us all perfectly. I saw my father's indifference and his persistent refusal to face anything; I saw my mother's fantastic imagination, which in my oldest sister amounts to disease; I knew my windbags of brothers, and my frail little flower of a sister. I lived among them like a crow among doves, cooing and flapping their wings. Sometimes I ran along with them — a funny enough spectacle; and sometimes I pecked at everybody around me. I was always the slow, surly fellow that couldn't fly off with the rest. I was suspicious. In short, I was a failure. Well, I left home. Then you came into the family. When I heard of the engagement, I thought, 'Well, now, he's probably a good tradesman who will just suit her.' But you — you aren't suited to her at all. They've got a hawk now instead of a crow, and that's much worse. I won't tell you everything my little sister told me in your room there in the twilight, — that your natures are entirely different; that you therefore have different desires and opinions; and that now, while you are continually interfering with one another, neither of you can take any pleasure in working out your own character in your own way — a way thoroughly justifiable in itself; the result is, that day after day and hour after hour you are hindering each other from having the little portion of happiness that you might otherwise have. To all this kind of talk from the wise little Philistine you haven't been able to say much — or have you perhaps? You've just said, in a general way, 'It'll be all right, little girl.' But you don't believe that yourself. You are tormented when you look forward into an empty, barren



life; and she is in torment too as she looks forward to a restless, worried life, full of reproaches. Nothing of all this is going to change. In twenty years you will still be wanting to fly high, and she will still be fluttering along the ground; and you'll still be saying the same thing — which you won't believe then, any more than you do now — 'It'll be all right, little girl.' ”

Klaus Baas took a deep breath. “It won't be as bad as that,” he said, in a hollow voice, and was silent.

His brother tried to settle his short figure more comfortably on his stool, finally succeeded in his efforts, and went on. “Up there in our woodyard,” he said, “we have an old workman whose wife died lately. I went to offer my sympathy. He knew perfectly well that I'm the kind of man that likes to know how things really are. The old fellow gave me a queer look, and said, ‘Are you coming too with all that bosh?’ ‘Why, why is it bosh?’ I said. ‘Haven't you always lived happily with the old woman?’ ‘Our married life was like a lot of other people's,’ he said, in a sullen, reflective way. ‘How's that?’ I said. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘we've each been wishing the other would die for thirty years.’ I'm a practical man, Klaus Baas, and am not easily scared. But I tell you I caught my breath a minute then. I looked at the honest old fellow in amazement. ‘Oh, we were quite honorable about it,’ he said. ‘We didn't care at all which of us died, just so one of us cleared out and left the other free to lead his own life again. Not that either of us wanted to do anything very particular, or break out in any queer way — it was just that we both wanted a chance to pipe our own tunes. We weren't suited to each other; we were in each other's way.’ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘why in God's name didn't you separate, thirty years, twenty years, ten, even one year ago? Thirty years like that! Oh, my Lord!’ ‘Well, when a man's young,’ he said, ‘his judgment's uncertain and he's always hoping that things will get better. And besides, at that time, divorce was an unheard-of thing. And then, there were the children — and our relations, and acquaintances; and we saw that there were plenty of other couples living

together in as bad a fix as we were. It dragged along that way, and we came to take a kind of pleasure in suffering unjustly, and in hoping for one or the other's death. It didn't seem worth the struggle to us. Now that she's dead things are pretty quiet — and perhaps there's something lacking here and there — but I can live now, and say and think what I feel like. I smoked all evening yesterday; she never would have let me.' The old man drew the back of his hand across his eyes and went on working. And now, see here, Klaus, that thing isn't going to happen to you two."

Klaus Baas started up again. "Such a horrible idea has never struck me."

The brother looked up at him long and soberly. "Then you're an angel," he said dryly.

Klaus Baas looked steadily down at the desk and was silent.

"And so I say," his brother went on, "that you ought to separate now, no matter how hard it is. Do it, so that there won't be two worn, fretted, barren lives, but two free, complete ones — even if they're very small. That's the way I feel about it."

Klaus Baas couldn't answer, except with an outcry of grief. "No man ever went to the altar with a purer, more ardent heart than I did," he said, "and can this be the end of it!"

His brother shrugged his shoulders, as if to concede that it was a serious business. Then in his deliberate way he went on. "You must leave her the child for always. Children belong to the mother, not the father. It can visit you, of course, whenever you feel that you want it. You would leave her all that you've earned with your work in her father's business in the last six years. Everything that you've earned at your other work, especially through the bank and your own speculations, must remain your own."

Klaus Baas nodded. "Much of what you've been saying is true," he said, "but things won't reach that point, at least not through me. In spite of everything else, we care too much about each other for that. I realize that my life

will remain narrow, and that I'll have to give up a good many joys, but I've pledged myself to her, and I'll hold by it. Loyalty is more than life."

His brother slowly shrugged his broad shoulders again. "Loyalty, oh, yes," he said. "Pledged, are you? She was twenty-three then, and you were twenty-six. Neither of you really knew yourself then. And you didn't either of you take the trouble to say, 'Prove each other a little — you may live together for forty years. And forty years is no trifle.' Well, let that go. You're pledged, you say. Well, pledged to what? To keep each other back, or to help each other along? To raise, or to drag down each other? When you were a young fellow were you irritable and worried, and did you have those wrinkles between your eyebrows? Why is it you are all these things now? And when you first met my little sister, was she weepy, and uncertain, and moody? Why is she so now? Because each of you is outraged by the other. Both your natures suffer constantly. Such a life together is not loyalty. It's just the opposite. Isn't it meant that every human being should develop his own character and bring it to fulfilment, and so be a joy and blessing to others?"

Then he wiped the sweat from his brow with his big red handkerchief, and left the room.

The next morning Klaus Baas took leave of him and went as usual to the weekly meeting at the bank.

Toward evening, as he was hurrying home from the station, thinking that he would chat with her cheerily that evening, he saw his father-in-law standing at the gate of the woodyard with a bitter, angry look on his face. He handed Klaus a letter, then turned around, and crossed the woodyard to his house. Standing at the gate, Klaus opened the letter and read it. Martje Ruhland wrote to him that she had gone to Kiel with her brother and the baby — she was sure that she was doing the right thing, she said, for she was now on the track of the peace she had been deprived of for so long — even if it were almost the peace of the grave. She hoped her "dear Klaus Baas" would think kindly of her.

For fourteen days Klaus Baas sat in one or the other of the two offices at the woodyard, introducing his successors to their work. For as every well regulated man would have done, he got two successors, one for the wood business and the other for the bank. He worked from early in the morning till late at night, instructing them in every possible detail. Once in a while his thoughts left his work, and he faced anew the incredible situation — his marriage — his marriage broken off! Constantly, with silent persistence, he thought of a reconciliation. When he was settled in Hamburg, where he would probably go to represent the bank, he certainly would write to her, "Now come to me again — we must and we will try it once more." She would come, and all would be well.

After all, it was quite for the best. He took leave with tears of the room, with all its little trinkets and her two lace-pillows. Then he walked to the harbor. He wanted to go to Hamburg in a roundabout way so that he might have time to collect himself a little. For although Klaus Baas was alert and high-spirited enough, he considered reflection of this sort right and fitting after all the experience he had just passed through.

Half an hour later he went to the dike. It was a fresh, windy spring day; the sky was blue, with big white and gray clouds. For a while he gazed far out over the peaceful sea lying like a silver shield. Then he turned slowly around to look over toward the beautiful city, stretched out on the level fields, with its groups of high lindens, its many red gable roofs, and the great church in the middle. Klaus had been there several times on the family's account — not at all, however, of late years, since he had withdrawn somewhat from the family. For a long time now he had concerned himself but little about God. Now he was at last quite done with "the stupid idealism of youth." It had duped him utterly, and it was because it had that he was going away so lonely now. But now at last his feet were on firm ground. He was determined to go on his way now quite soberly and clearly, thinking only of himself, taking hold again with fresh firm hands, concern-

ing himself as little as possible about God and man. And it was time, too, if he was still going to make something out of his life.

He wandered along through the country, between the fields, lying broad and beautiful in the evening light, and the great quiet sea. The rays of the sun shone round him, and the brisk wind blew into his face, now and then bringing with it a sprinkle of spring shower. The sky was covered with many bright and dark clouds, which the fresh wind chased to and fro, mingled, drove apart, and finally quite drove away.

When the sun had gone down and all its colors had faded, Klaus drew near the little place that his brother Peter had bought a short time before. After his marriage, Peter had followed in his father's footsteps and had been shepherd for other people's herds for years along the vast green dike. Now he had his own flock on the little place he had bought, and on the ground in front of it, which he had leased. The house, which was quite close to the dike, was old and low, with a thatched and shingled roof in a rather bad state. The flocks were grazing out around the land. In the mist, which had fallen like a heavy veil over the darkening land, Klaus couldn't see the flocks at all, but the form of the boy that was tending them loomed through the mist, and Klaus could hear him calling his dog.

Trina Mewing, who had once tied the purse so tightly into the mattress, was sitting at supper in the fast darkening room with her four children. In spite of the dark, she recognized her guest at once, although she hadn't seen him very often. She wiped off a chair with her blue linen apron, asked him to sit down, and sent the children after their father. When the guest was comfortably seated, she went out to get some bread and milk for him.

To pass the time, Klaus took up one of the children's copybooks and tried to read it. "You'd better go over to the window," cried an old voice from the bed in the wall. "It gets dark so early now, and writing isn't easy to read anyway."

He walked over to the bed, where he saw indistinctly

an old woman's wrinkled face. "Who is it lying there?" he asked. "Trina Mewing's mother?"

"Yes," said the old woman, "I'm Trina's mother. They've taken me to live with them, because I really can't do for myself any more; I'm almost eighty."

"Well," said Klaus Baas, heartily, "are you pretty comfortable here, grandmother?"

"Yes," said the old woman; "your brother's very good to an old woman like me. I wouldn't be telling the truth if I said anything else. He's a shrewd fellow, it's true, but he isn't a bad one."

"I suppose you're sick, grandmother, since you're in bed?"

"No," said the old woman, "not a bit of it. I tell you, Peter's a shrewd fellow. He uses folks for what they're good for. I don't say anything more than that. I wouldn't be telling the truth if I said he was a bad one."

"Well," said Klaus Baas, "people aren't all alike. He gets that from his mother," he said louder. "She's shrewd, too." Then he sat down by the window.

Soon Peter came home from the dike. He walked heavily into the room, shook hands with his brother, threw his cap on the chest, ran his left hand through his hair, and brushed off his coat with his right — all out of respect for his brother. Then he told his little boy to fill his short pipe, and began in his usual way to tell about all the troubles he had been having lately: the moving had cost more than he had expected; the goslings had died; and sometimes he had been short of breath lately — something quite new for him. He certainly was having pretty hard lines just now.

Meanwhile, with his pipe cheerfully lighted and his legs crossed, he was leaning back, taking good puffs, and apparently feeling quite comfortable. In a loud, cheery voice he told how he had sent part of his furniture over by sea by some fishermen. "And now just think of this," he said; "when Karl Lüders comes in with his wherry and tries to land in Priel, what comes to meet him but

the damned revenue cutter. He was coming from outside the country, they said, and would have to pay duty and a fine and heaven knows what all. Well, then, what did Karl Lüders do? He gets worried and turns straight around and goes out of the customs limits again. And there he anchors near Dicksander Gatt with our furniture and our potatoes and our old grandmother, who was on board too, and fishes for turbot. Well, naturally, my wife doesn't give me any peace — although I don't generally concern myself much about the women's cackling. So I put on my boots and I go over to the customs superintendent at Itzehoe and tell him my troubles and tell him to send out the revenue cutter again to bring back Karl Lüders and his boat, dead or alive. But when I get home that evening, he's there already, anchored in Priel. The old woman hadn't had anything to eat but turbot — turbot every day, and she had struck. That's pretty hard lines, isn't it? . . . Well, now, how are things going with you?"

"Well," drawled Klaus, speaking rather louder than was necessary, "I've decided that I don't want to work along with the old man any longer. In the long run it isn't best. And it isn't good for my wife, either. I'm going to Hamburg to represent the bank there, or to find something else."

Peter Baas shifted his pipe a little, and said with a sly look, "Something wrong there! I take it for granted," he said suspiciously, "that your wife's entirely on your side?"

Klaus Baas shrugged his shoulders. "A wife's a human being," he said, "and has a nature of her own."

Peter, thoroughly puzzled, was silent for a moment.

"A wife's a human being?" he drawled. "Well, yes — but when we're talking about a man we say he, and about a woman, it; there are different kinds of human beings, brother. She hasn't a nature of her own, brother. Now I, as the man," pointing the end of his pipe at his breast, "I have *the* nature, and the woman, she has *my* nature, see? All the women in the house — it doesn't matter

if there are thirteen of them — have got to obey on the minute. Otherwise, how can there be any order?"

While Peter Baas was still pointing his pipe at his breast, the old woman's voice was heard from the bed — "I've told your brother already that you're a pretty shrewd one."

Peter Baas slowly turned the end of his pipe toward the bed, as he said to his brother, "Day before yesterday one of the geese left her eggs too soon. So I've put the old woman to bed to hatch them out. What else is she here for? Everybody's got to help along. A man's got to have the say-so, brother. If you've got a sensible wife, you can sometimes let her have her own way, but it's really always your way. Do you have a bad time of it here, old lady?"

"No," said the old woman, out of the darkness. "I am very comfortable here, and what you say is all right. But you're a shrewd one."

After this point had been disposed of, Peter Baas lighted his pipe, which had gone out, and sent his wife and children, who had been sitting by silently, to bed. Then he talked to his brother for a while in the dark, his pipe now and then sending up a glow that lighted up the room and the bed in the wall. They talked about the boys they used to play with in the churchyard. Peter Baas knew them all still and had something to tell about many of them. As for Klaus, Hamburg and the Indian sun had made him quite forget and lose his interest in those far-off days. They talked also about their father, and about strong, pretty Lotte; about how bravely their mother had put things through, and about the four younger ones, who were grown up too, now, but were still living with their mother. Hanna was a teacher; Fritz was a locksmith; and their mother was still supporting little Johann, who was an apprentice in an office, and little Lotte. When they had talked things over for a long time in seriously brotherly fashion, Peter Baas grew weary. He became quieter, and as the pipe glowed more faintly, his eyes looked little and blinking. Klaus Baas



got up to go. But he came so seldom that he had to inspect the rooms carefully. He stumbled along behind the smoky lantern, past the beds of Peter's wife and children, then past the two cows and the pigs, through the kitchen to the yard, and out on the road.

Half an hour later, as he lay in bed in the inn high up on the dike, he went back to his own affairs again. Suppose Martje Ruhland had always done his will silently and gladly. What would Peter have made of the little woman? He would have beaten her, and then she would have run away to her mother. Of course! Oh, the poor little creature, who had run away from him! He wondered if she were lying in bed as peacefully as he was, so pleasantly tired after a full day. She had probably cried a great deal that day, and was lying now more quietly than he was. She was naturally so quiet, so satisfied to fall asleep in her little circle. He had been the daily disturbing element of her life, he with his pondering, his desire to be doing something, his planning, his opinions — in short, with his devouring passion for men and things. If only he had not disturbed her then, six years ago! Probably it would be better for them to remain apart. It was remarkable how this one day of peaceful wandering and quiet reflection had drawn him out of his trouble, so that he could look upon it more calmly and from a greater distance. But he was too tired to meditate on it to-night. How very tired he was! And how far he had walked — how wide the land and sea had seemed, and how high the sky! He closed his eyes peacefully, and soon saw nothing at all but the soft quiet glow of his brother's pipe as he droned along about the right way to treat women — and then Klaus knew nothing more.

The next morning he went on, this time inland. He walked along, now on broad roads, now on narrow paths, on which the sun had already dried the sand, through wide, quiet, slightly rolling country, past little farm thickets and past lonely farm-yards; about every half hour he passed a village. In front of many of the houses, enticed out by the air of early spring, stood a young

woman with a child in her arms, another tugging at her apron, and the rest playing around her. They all greeted the vigorous traveller, sometimes a little shyly, sometimes with simple friendliness, sometimes half smilingly. When any of the women particularly pleased him, he asked her to direct him to the nearest church village. And if she answered him cordially, he stopped for a while to ask how old the children were and how many of them went to school. And he was amazed at himself for being in such good spirits, considering his situation.

He walked all that day. With every step he became calmer and more free, while the people and the things he was leaving became stranger and farther away. The air was clear, full of a soft and lovely light, and the wind had died down. Everywhere, to the far horizon, there was nothing but a great silence and a glorious peace. The trees, as he passed them, seemed to have fallen into silence, and men and beasts went on their way in the fields in blissful calm. Toward evening, tired out and lost in soft dreams, he reached a large village.

He sauntered along the main street, in which the twilight was already weaving its wan bluish gray mists. From the old churchyard, with its uneven turf, the sexton, with his big shiny key in his hand, was just coming from ringing the evening bell. Three or four children were sitting on a big stone on the grass with their Bibles on their laps, studying: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son." The crows chimed in from the tall trees. The bell on a shop door rang, and the door opened and shut; children and women were going along silently, carrying their purchases. A little boy of eight or nine, walking along with an old man, was telling him excitedly what had happened to him. It seemed that he had been sent into the next town, and had stayed too long, so his grandfather had gone to meet him. The bright little voice could be heard at some distance: "Grandfather, have you ever seen a dead man?" The old man's voice was not so distinct: "Yes, my boy, a whole heap of them at once—I was in a battle." A

farm-yard lay broad and dark in the shadow of its trees ; in the wide open doorway a dim light shone, like a mournful little star in the great night. The servant was filling the trough with fodder ; Klaus heard the lid flapping down, the animals knocking against the stalls, and the chains clanking. A tall stately woman, still young, was walking along slowly and with difficulty, carrying two brass-bound pails of milk from a yoke around her neck ; the milk gleamed white as snow in the twilight. As she passed him, she raised her head cautiously to look at the stranger, and greeted him. In the open smithy the smith was standing in the firelight behind the glowing metal and the shining iron, letting his hammer play on the anvil with a noise that sounded through the village. His boy, in his leather apron, was crouching timidly beside him on his knees, holding the rod. The schoolhouse by the brook stood silent and deserted, as if it needed to rest earlier than the other houses from its noisy day's work.

Klaus came upon a little byway leading behind the houses. Following it, he passed some smaller thatched houses in which the mother was standing at the hearth in front of the sputtering kettle of beans ; in one house grown children were standing talking sensibly to her ; in another little ones were tugging at her apron-strings, trying to see into the kettle. From the field came the clanging of iron ; a colt was trying a little trot, in spite of the chain on its leg ; then it even broke into a gallop. Its firm leaps on the hard ground could be plainly heard.

Klaus came out again upon the broad main street, where he found an inn. Then he awakened from his silent musing, pulled himself together, and went in.

He found a clean room, with a writing table ; and he wrote straightway to little Martje Ruhland that he had carefully thought it all over, and now it seemed right to him that they should separate "so that both of us may become, according to our gifts, whatever it lies in us to be."

## CHAPTER XIX

THE next morning found him walking along broad old roads, through a great stretch of barren country. He lunched at a quiet village tavern. About the middle of the afternoon, as he was walking along a broad road leading to a larger town, he reached a wood. He could see handsome leafy trees covering fine rolling slopes, and a pretty stream of water flowing through it. At a turn in the road a few feet in front of the wood was a camp wagon, standing under the tall overhanging bushes by the roadside, bright in their spring foliage. Around it stood several village people from the neighborhood in evident excitement. On the little steps leading from the wagon to the ground a little man about forty years old was sitting motionless. His hands were clasped between his knees and his eyes were blinded with tears.

Klaus Baas stood still, not knowing what to make of the scene. Then one of the townsfolk came up and told him in a low voice what the trouble was. About ten years before this, it seems, two small storekeepers from the most crowded section of Hamburg had found this wood while they were off on a trip about Eastertime. They were both very fond of out-of-door life, and they had enjoyed the beauty of this wood so much that since then they had come back at this time every year. After the sordid winter months in Hamburg, they came back to the wood to celebrate the coming of spring; and they came during the summer as often as they could get away from business. They used the wagon as a house, and lived along in this way without being disturbed by the community that owned the land. Indeed, the people around there had a good deal of amusement over the two modest,

quietly happy men. During the last year, however, they had been bothered by the police because of a law forbidding living in wagons. At noon that very day they had received orders to take theirs away. One of them had gone to town to get a pair of horses, and while his friend was gone the other, a quiet, simple fellow, whose sole joy in life consisted in this modest vacation, had committed suicide in the wagon.

Just as the man had finished his story, Klaus spied, coming down from the field side of the road, a rather tall young girl. She had on a loose jacket and a short, comfortable skirt, and she walked briskly, with an energetic swing of her shoulders. To his surprise, he recognized the goldsmith whom he had met on the Schleswig road three years before. He felt glad to see her, and stepped back a little. In her clear, composed way, she looked at the pitiful little man on the steps. Even before she reached him she began to shake her yellow head sorrowfully, and say, "Oh, I am so sorry! so sorry!" She shook the little man's hand. Then turning to the people, she broke out with heart-felt reproaches. "They didn't disturb anybody — weren't in anybody's way. Everybody has his own idea of what he likes. Heaven help us if a man can't think and live the way he wants to!" Just then she looked up and saw the stranger from town. She started, recognized him, and then, with a look of pleased surprise, held out her hand and asked him where he was going.

He pointed out the direction in which he was going, and walked along the road with her. It was a very wide road, overgrown with heather, and one could walk along it with tolerable comfort only in the two wagon tracks. Each of them took a rut, and in this way each had a fine chance to scan the other from head to foot, an opportunity they used to the utmost.

She asked him about his sick sister-in-law. He told her briefly that he had left the place, and his married life as well, and was now on his way to Hamburg. She listened to his story with friendly interest, asking all sorts of sen-

sible questions. Now that he was free and single, she treated him exactly as she had treated him three years before when he was tied. Pleased at meeting her, he blessed the luck that allowed him to see the fine, rare creature again. Looking at her saucily, he asked her to tell him now who and what *she* was.

She only laughed at him. "Come in to the village," she said, "and have supper with us, — that is, with me and my aunt, whom you remember having seen on your trip to Schleswig. Then she can tell you who and what we are. I have to do it so often that I don't like to any more. I just say, 'My name's Doris Rotermund, and I live with my aunt.' She has sold out her business. I say frankly that I'd rather live with a man — but none has turned up as yet." She gave him a quick side glance, laughed cockily, and went on a little faster: "I found out your name from the coachman that time. And I thought, well, the boys must certainly have had a lot of fun with him about it. They must have said things like, 'You're a boss all right,' or 'Klaus, you certainly are a boss,' or, 'Your name's boss and master, and you are such a dunce' — or something of that kind." She looked at him gayly, her slight confusion quite forgotten. Pointing to the brook, she said, "See how it flows. It leaps and chatters that way all along. The pebbles must hurt its feet. I had just got my shoes on again when I heard the outcry there by the wagon. Now we'll just go a little way around to see if we can find an old man that lives there at the corner. I go this way once in a while to see him."

They walked along a narrow shaded road which rounded in a handsome curve past an old low house in the wood, sheltered by great poplars, whose gray, gleaming leaves were upturned by the fresh west wind.

On the white bench before the ivy-covered wall sat a fine-looking man of about sixty years. He still looked energetic, and his white hair and beard were neatly clipped. He looked up and nodded his white head in welcome. She went up to him in her fine, easy way, saying as she went: "Don't you want to give my friend one

of your canes? I can't bear to see a tall man like him use such a slender cane. One of yours would suit him better."

The old man had already got up and gone into the house. He came back with a dozen fine oak staffs which he laid on the table. Then he sat down again and asked his visitors to take seats. "Take your choice," he said pleasantly to Klaus. "For twenty years I've been cutting these oak staffs when I've been out walking. Then I straighten them in hot water and smooth them off and give myself the pleasure of making presents of them. I've given away over a thousand. Many a man I've never seen before has come to my house and got one of my sticks. In that way I get many a moment of talk, hear all kinds of news around the country, and am doing a good deed besides; for those canes are strong and handy."

The girl, sitting with her chin resting on her hand and her legs crossed, looked on with interest as Klaus tried the canes. "The main thing in this case," she said casually, "is that it's a good deed. Almost a thousand good deeds,—think of it! Now if you had committed a great many sins, some of them would be absolved already. Of course, if they had been great big sins, giving away canes wouldn't help much."

The old man laughed and gave her a teasing side glance as she sat there looking steadily at the canes. "You can never give up your little joke about my sins," he said. "I'd rather like to know how many sins you've got behind you. You're not any saint, either, let me tell you."

She tapped her foot, and answered good-humoredly, "I'm just twenty-two, and I've sinned just five times — the same sin every time."

He laughed his pleasant cheery laugh again. "I wonder," he said, "what kind of a sin it can be to make you have such a contented, happy look while you're thinking about it."

"In my opinion," she answered defiantly, "they aren't sins at all. Society just calls them sins. But they aren't among the ten commandments, anyway."

“Well!” said the old man, with a smile. “But perhaps it’s a kind of addition to one of the ten commandments. Shall I guess?”

She blushed. “You needn’t think I’m going to display my sins in the market-place like other folks,” she said. She was silent again, but realizing that she was blushing more and more, she got up quickly. “Have you got the one you want?” she said to Klaus Baas. She straightway shook hands with the old man, straightened out her skirts, and started slowly off.

The old man looked laughingly after her with his oddly young eyes. And as Klaus Baas was shaking hands with him and thanking him for the cane, he said, “Full-blooded natures like hers usually have an element of unrestraint, but she’s clever and good with it all—and she knows what she wants.”

When they were out of the old man’s hearing, Klaus Baas asked what all that joking meant—what sins had the old man committed? She looked at him with a glint of embarrassment in her handsome eyes. “Oh,” she answered, “the old man’s been pretty fond of women all his life. He lived with three pretty women, one after the other, in that house—in fact, I knew the last one—and he wasn’t married to any one of them.”

He looked at her closely. “Do you mean to say,” he asked, “do you mean to say that you tease him about that, and don’t blame him or avoid him for it?”

She looked good-humoredly into the distance and answered: “Everybody in these parts says that he has always been a good, reliable, charitable man. He still shows it in the way he makes those canes and gives them away. And they say he treated the women decently and that they left him peaceably. Well—you see, I like that. And I like him, too.” She nodded her head as if to say, “You see, that’s the kind I am.”

He looked steadily at her and waited till she had finished. Then he said quickly, “And what are the sins that you have committed?”

She laughed curtly, gave him a quick look, and then,



looking across the field, said with a smile, "I don't call them sins. I haven't really sinned at all."

"Never committed a single sin?" he asked in astonishment.

She looked directly at him, and answered decidedly, "No, I wouldn't know how to. The things I look on as sins are the things I don't do. I've never betrayed any one that trusted me; I've never idled away my time; I've never thought or said vulgar things; I've never let my body or my clothes or the gold I work with get dirty or out of shape; I've never had or shown any ugly feeling. And I've never done anything else that's a sin. I think far too much of God and myself for that." She stopped, and looked with wide clear eyes over the darkening landscape.

He tried to tease her and find out more about it. "But I want to know," he said, "what the so-called sins that you've committed are!"

"I won't tell," she said, laughing gayly.

He looked grave. "Well, but that's a bad sign," he said.

"Not in the least," she answered. "Do you mean to say that a person can't have a secret that isn't a sin?" As she looked at him in her sweet, frank way, he distinctly saw her blue eyes delicately crossed by fine gray lines.

He had never looked so closely into a woman's eyes before, and he had difficulty in turning away his eyes and collecting his thoughts. "It certainly has something to do with love," he said.

"That's a clever idea," said she, with a look of clear scorn. "If a girl's twenty-two, it's usually a matter of love. It might just as well be that I had lost some gold plate at my goldsmith work, or something else of that sort." And she laughed at him gayly.

"I saw all your teeth then," said Klaus.

She raised her hands, laughing. "That's another sin," she said.

They came down from the high ground toward the village lying in front of them in the pleasant evening light.

The girl's alert eyes peered into the distance, wandered to the distant hills on the left, and then reverted hastily to the man at her side. He saw little of the beautiful landscape stretching around him; he had eyes only for the girl swinging lightly along at his side.

At the very beginning of the main street, she pointed to a nice-looking red house surrounded by a little garden filled with shrubs. "That's where we live," she said. "An uncle of mine, who used to have a farm here, retained the house, and after his death it came to us. But we still have a little farm left; my aunt manages it."

She let him in, took his hat and cane, and showed him into the little dining room, where the table was already set. Then she showed him the larger living-room, where her work-table stood by the window. It was covered with wrought plate, books, and all kinds of tools. In her easy way, she took him through the kitchen, where a sober old servant was getting supper, and then through her bedroom. He looked curiously at the big iron bed and the plain bookshelves, at the wash-stand with the big wash-bowl, at the white window-curtains fluttering in the wind. Loath to leave, he stayed to look at several pictures on the wall. There was a head of Goethe when a young man, an old oak on the edge of a forest, a naked girl sitting on her bathrobe on a sofa, a village scene with a towering church, Potter's young bull, and a tiny bust of Apollo. He went back to the middle of the room and looked around again while she stood with her hand on the door-knob waiting for him. At last he said, very thoughtfully, "There are so few people — so few men, even — who have a character and a will of their own. I've been living for six years with a woman who simply hung on, now to me, now to her mother, and now to some neighbor. You're a girl, and a very young one — and yet you stand absolutely on your own feet."

She had been listening to him in amazement, her wise eyes fastened upon him. When he had finished she gave him a long searching glance, and then walked silently out of the room ahead of him.

When they went back to the dining room they found the aunt, home from the field, sitting in her stately way at the table. She laughed cheerily and said, in her soft, kindly old voice: "Who is this you're bringing in, you gadabout? The first look I gave your work-table, I knew you'd been afflicted with laziness and had gone out."

When she heard the guest's name she recognized him and seemed glad to see him. "Just as I was going out to see to the milking a little while ago," she said to her niece, "I met our light-haired friend, come out from town. He wanted to know whether the brooch was done, and he seemed to be sorry you weren't at home. He just looked blankly around the room."

"Oh, well," the girl said, "he's one of those folks that look as if they hadn't quite got over their last yawn." Then she told about the tragedy on the outskirts of the forest, about how she had met Klaus, and how she had wheedled a cane out of the old man.

After supper they went into the sitting-room and sat around the table with the lamp. Klaus Baas's chair was opposite the sofa. The aunt sat in a comfortable wicker chair beside him. The handsome girl established herself straightway on the broad sofa. "Now, aunt," she said, "he wants to know my whole story, and I told him that I couldn't be telling it all the time. So go on, you tell him the life history of Doris Rotermund." She leaned back, letting her calm eyes roam now to the guest, now to her aunt, now along the walls, on which appeared here and there a warm bright reflection from a gold frame or a glass. In the course of the evening she built herself a regular nest out of all kinds of gay pillows, which she had doubtless worked herself. Then stealthily and cautiously, she took off her shoes and tucked her feet under her, seeming to feel tremendously comfortable. Meantime her aunt went serenely on with the diverting story:—

"She is the daughter of a captain from Apenrade. He could take his wife, who was my sister, to sea with him, especially as he had an interest of three thousand marks in the ship. Their first child, her brother, was born on the

Indian Ocean; he is a mate now. When the captain and his wife came home again after this voyage, they left the baby with its grandparents in Apenrade and embarked again for the South Sea. This girl was born there, but in what degrees of latitude and longitude we don't know, for the ship's records were lost. We know the date of her birth, however, because her father and mother sent the news to the grandparents from Melbourne, the nearest port. She was kept on board the ship, which went on into the South Sea from Melbourne to Auckland, from there to Samoa, and to San Francisco.

“We do not really know what kind of people her parents were. Her mother, my sister, was brought up by an uncle, and I hardly knew her. And what grandfather and grandmother tell about her hardly counts; for as a rule parents don't know their own children. But in Hamburg once we hunted up an old sailor who was on board with them for a good while. One of the things he told was that the two were always joking each other, and that they always treated the crew well. One day, he said, my sister happened to say that the people on the *Frisia* were certainly contented, and that they ought to be, for they wouldn't fare so well on any other ship. Her husband said that wasn't altogether true, for there was Jan Maat, whom nothing could satisfy. Then they made a wager about whether she could succeed in really making Jan Maat satisfied for once in his life. If the captain lost, he was to buy her a silk lace scarf in Melbourne. She had a lot of short curly hair, like Doris's and mine, particularly around her temples; and the wind loosened it and blew it around her ears. If she lost, she was to buy him a gay vest.

“On Sunday she herself took into their quarters a particularly good meat dish. She stayed with them for a little while and asked them if it was good. They all nodded, ‘Yes, indeed, missus, just fine.’ When they finished that, she took them some fine apple dumplings, made out of dried Australian apples and covered with sauce. She asked again if they tasted good. ‘Yes, indeed, missus,’ they said, ‘just fine.’ When they had finished

the dumplings, she brought them two bottles of wine, and asked casually if they were quite satisfied. They nodded. 'Yes, indeed, missus, we're quite satisfied now.' She was in high glee at having won the bet. But, quite willing to hear a little more commendation, she hid behind the door and listened to what they said. They talked about various things. And then some one said, 'Satisfied, are we? not by a long shot. The next thing to do is to sleep with the missus.' At that she hurried away into the cabin, where she declared that she had won. But her husband, seeing her blush, knew that something was wrong, and kept at her till she confessed. He laughed long and loud, while she scolded; and finally she laughed too. For three days she gave them poor food in order to make up for the gay vest she had lost to the captain.

"On the next voyage — Doris was then a year old — the ship struck a bad storm on the high seas, sprang a leak, and began to sink. The mate had to get the boats ready at once, and give a signal of distress to a steamer that was in sight. Meanwhile Doris's father and mother bundled her into a gin cask and fastened strips of boarding across the top so that she would make the trip over the edge into the boat as simply and safely as possible. They carried the cask on deck and tied it to the mizzenmast till they were ready to go, and left the boy to take care of it. Then they went below to get the ship's papers, the provisions, and the bedding. In the meantime the rest of the crew, who had come to launch the boats, saw the cask of gin standing there. The boy had lost his head and forgot his orders. 'What's that full cask doing there?' they exclaimed to one another. 'Open it up, Blau, so we can take along a few bottles.' Just as the carpenter raised his axe, my sister appeared. She ran under the axe — and was severely wounded in the arm. That's how it happened that she didn't go over with the baby in the first boat. The second, carrying the father and mother, was wrecked just as it started. In a few minutes it filled with water and sank. The second mate, a young man of twenty-two, brought the child over from Melbourne to

Hamburg and handed her over to her grandparents. She was carefully brought up by them in Apenrade.

"After she was confirmed, she continued to help her grandmother with the housekeeping, spending her spare time at a goldsmith's. Finally she went to Hamburg for a year, in order to learn what she needed to know about her art and craft. Then we came here to live in the house our uncle had left. She has an imagination that sees delicate beauty everywhere; and she has skilful hands in showing it forth. She has no trouble in finding purchasers for her finished work or her designs, either in the province or in Hamburg."

Here Doris Rotermund leaned forward a little from her sofa corner. "Well, now, finish it up quick, auntie," she said. "Now tell him about the merchant."

The aunt looked at her in amazement, then looked hesitatingly at Klaus Baas. "Do you really mean me to tell that?" she asked dubiously. "Why, not another soul knows anything about it." And she laid her hand tenderly on Doris's arm.

But as Doris nodded and repeated, "Go on, tell it," she went hesitatingly on with the story.

"Two years ago, just after we had settled here, her brother, the mate, came to see us, bringing with him a friend of his, a merchant. At first he spent a week here with the brother, as our guest; and then he stayed on a week with us alone. During that last week she and her brother's friend were constantly together—in the house, out walking in the fields and the wood, and often until late at night. I didn't hinder her. She is grown up, and knows what she's about. When he went away, I asked her whether she was engaged to him. She answered, 'You know he has to go away to Eastern Asia for three years. I don't know whether I can wait for him three years. And maybe he would be even less able to wait than I am. So why should we deceive each other? We have agreed that each of us shall be a free agent and shall do or not do just what he can justify to himself. And when we meet again neither shall call the other to ac-

count.' So that's the way it is now. For two years they've been exchanging friendly letters, which I'm always allowed to read. At the end of the letters there's always the same thing — 'I'd give anything in the world to kiss you again. I have kissed you only five times — do you remember when? Once at Schledorn. Once by the river. And three times in your room.'"

Klaus Baas looked over at the girl in the sofa corner. "So those are the five sins!" he thought. "Well! but they weren't kisses, you rogue," he thought, looking at her saucily. "They were more than that, I know!"

She returned his look calmly and soberly, as if to say, "You would have done it, too." Then her endurance gave out and she bowed her head in her hands and wept.

Klaus Baas and the aunt were silent and embarrassed. Her aunt caressed her cheek. She quickly recovered herself, and crept out of her nest of cushions. "I'm tired now," she said. "If you want to spend another day around here, you'd better go to the Bornhöveder heath tomorrow morning. It's very broad and beautiful, and has an atmosphere all its own. Then come back here and talk to-morrow evening."

Klaus left then and went to spend the night at the inn. He spent the next day wandering through old villages on the heath, where the houses seemed half sunken into the ground. He walked across great silent meadows, and stood for a long time on the Königshugel looking far out over the expanse of fields to the west, from which, seven hundred years before, his countrymen had advanced to a momentous battle. He returned to the village in the evening twilight. As he passed Doris's house the shades were not drawn, and he saw her sitting working by lamplight. He stood for a while at the hedge watching her hammer and file and fit pieces together as she sat with her head bent and her hair waving around her temples.

When he went there after supper, they were sitting in the same places they had been in the evening before, and his chair was placed, too. They gave him apples, and

asked questions about his walk. Then they said it was his turn now to tell something about his life.

Gravely he began his story. He told them about the stormy day of his baptism, about playing hoop in the wind with the round shavings, about the churchyard and Liese Lachmann, and about the death of his father and sister. Then he went on to the tall painter, Tante Laura, and to Peter Sööt. He told about himself, first as an intimidated, then a haughty, apprentice in P. C. Trimborn's office; about Heini Peters; about Suse Garbens's engagement; about the girl that was angry, and about the gentle one in the Mühlen Strasse whom he had betrayed. He told about those fine nights at Blankenese, and about the hot nights in India. He explained how, when he had come back home, he had taken the first pretty girl that had crossed his path, and how, in those years when he was living with her, he had broadened and grown more mature, but had been unhappy in a constant sense of restraint. He told it all open-heartedly, sometimes dreamily, sometimes harshly, clearly, and passionately. He told it straight to her, with a direct appeal to the beautiful, understanding eyes. And when he had finished the eyes were full of a strange and powerful love.

Just then the door opened and a little girl of the neighborhood came in to ask whether the aunt wouldn't come over for a little while. Her father and mother had gone to see her sick grandmother, and the children were afraid. The aunt got up at once, said good night to Klaus, and went out.

Klaus went back to sit down again. But he knew that he could not speak calmly. He looked at her, and with a hesitating "Shall I go?" reached out his hand toward her.

She rose slowly from her corner, keeping her eyes on the floor. She gave him her hand, and started around his chair. But as she came near him, and stood there holding his hand, trembling and helpless, he drew her suddenly to him. In a transport of passion he kissed her over and over again, stroking her hair, and insisting that



she should and must be good to him, if it were only this once. He had been unhappy and chilled for so long. He had never known what complete love was; she was unutterably lovely and dear to him. With closed eyes she stood there in his arms, shaking her head silently. She tried to say that she was not responsible for her nature, that she wasn't really bad, that she honestly did not want to desert her other lover. She tried to smile, but her lips trembled, and the tears welled from between her closed lids. Then, as if the first storm were over, she recovered herself somewhat, looked around the room, straightened her hair, and then stood there in his arms, calmly, in full possession of herself. With her handsome head bowed thoughtfully, she went with him into her bedroom.

Very early the next morning she accompanied him to the bridge over the river, which in a beautiful sweep winds southward from the village through the broad valley. He made her promise him again and again that she would write to him if she got into trouble. And walking along on his arm, and looking a little pale and tired, she smiled wisely, almost a little scornfully, to herself, and promised him, absolutely composed and assured again, just as she was when he had first seen her at the edge of the forest.

He besought her not to think for a moment that he thought the least bit less of her now. At that she shook her head. "Of course not!" she said. "How could you think it was contemptible in me when it wasn't contemptible in you?"

They soon reached the river. When they were half-way across the old wooden bridge, she gave him her hand and looked into his face a long while, as if she wanted to retain it in her memory. "There's one thing more I want to tell you," she said, "and that is that I thank you." He drew her to him and kissed her, telling her once more how he marvelled at her beautiful true nature, and how much good she had done him. Then he left her.

When he had gone a short distance, he looked around

and saw her form just vanishing along the overgrown road. Behind her rose the dark bulk of the village, over which hung the cool, dark gray sky of dawn, mistily concealing infinite depths. He stood still for a while to see if he could catch another glimpse of her. Then he collected himself, suddenly realizing that he was alone. And overwhelmed at what he had passed through, he cried out through the quiet, gray dawn, "Now I have known the divine miracle. I have known what life and love are. And I know the meaning of wife and children, of sorrow and of death!"

## CHAPTER XX

THE sky was overcast when he came into Hamburg at about noon. It occurred to him, since he was feeling so cheerful, to look in on Heini Peters as he passed, before devoting himself to his own business. Engrossed with his own affairs and with family worries, he had in all this time seen Heini Peters very seldom, and then only in the town. All that he knew about him now was that he and his friend Busch still held an agency—at present for household implements, and that he was “doing very well,” as the old doctors used to say in the square.

He found the two men in an untidy little office near the Gänsemarkt. Situated in the rear of a court, it was so dark that this morning, when it was almost raining anyway, they had to have the gas lighted. Under the light the two partners were sitting across from each other, on high office chairs at a great double desk. Heini Peters, who had just come back from an errand, had on the inevitable black coat, which hung oddly down from his chair. His friend Busch was a short, sturdily built man of about thirty, whose broad features were pressed together as if some one had put too heavy a hand on his head; and he had a merry twinkle in his eye. When Klaus came in, Heini and Busch were in the midst of a loud, good-humored chat. The thick smoke from their short sailor's pipes was blowing over the desk, and they had an open beer bottle and glasses between them. Innumerable flies everywhere on the wall seemed to indicate that there were stables near by.

Heini Peters was delighted to see his visitor. “This is my friend Busch,” he said. “You've heard me speak of him.”

Friend Busch's bright little eyes blinked merrily, as if he knew that only very commendable things had been told of him. Taking a not too clean glass from the window-sill, he asked Klaus to have some beer, and affected great surprise at Klaus's refusal. "You ought to take a drink in the mornings, my good sir," he said. "No machine runs well without oiling."

With a significant wave of his hand, Heini Peters turned his big, worried eyes on Klaus Baas, and said, with a deep sigh, "Well, what have you to say about these dreadful times?"

"What's that?" asked Klaus, rather at a loss. "I haven't seen the paper for four days." Then, with a sudden recollection, he asked eagerly. "Has the money market gone up as much as that?"

Heini Peters raised his long arm in a sinister gesture. "Is it possible you don't know?" he said. "Don't you know that the discount rate is seven per cent, that the banks are calling in their loans constantly, that Tewes and Gibbon are insolvent? People are whispering and prophesying all sorts of things. Everybody's asking for his money as if people were trying to steal it; or if they have it, they're holding on to it as if it would fly away."

Klaus Baas rose, suddenly grown very grave and alert. Hastily going over in his mind his own affairs and the men and companies he knew, he pondered what significance all this might have for him. "Well!" he said, "what about your business? How is it going?" he went on, out of pure politeness. He looked at the man with the broad squat face, as if he might be more likely to get at the facts through him.

But friend Busch shrugged his stocky shoulders, reached for his glass, took a good swallow, and pointing the empty glass at his companion, said, "Make a clean breast of it, Heini. Perhaps the good gentleman has a thousand marks lying loose in his pockets."

Heini Peters looked at his old friend rather drearily. "You know," he said, "we've been selling household arti-

cles for eight weeks; that is to say, we've been trying to sell them. But we can't make it go."

"No, we can't," put in friend Busch.

"Through our connections we got the agencies for two factories. At first I went on the road, but that didn't bring in anything. Then friend Busch went, but that didn't bring in anything either. And now we've lost the best of the agencies."

Friend Busch stroked his beard, which was wet with beer, and said, with a roguish twinkle, "Each of us has a failing, Herr Baas. Heini's always meeting young girls on the way and having to stop and drink a cup of coffee or chocolate with them. And I'm a little too much on the lookout for tavern signs."

Heini Peters raised his long legs higher and twisted them intricately around the legs of his stool. "Eight weeks ago," he began gloomily, "when we went over to this household implement business, my old folks sent me a thousand marks—the last lot they could get hold of. Unfortunately I had to pay out three hundred marks to the tailor at once; and about a hundred to the bookseller."

"For poems!" said friend Busch, blinking at Klaus Baas.

Heini Peters laughed gayly to himself for a moment, then shook his head and went on soberly. "With the six hundred that were left we rented this office and bought the furniture; that is to say, we got it on the instalment plan; it's about half paid for. Besides that, we gave a note for two thousand marks to the master mason around the corner here. It fell due a month ago and we haven't a groschen to pay it with. He would probably have left us in peace for some time, ordinarily, for my friend Busch knows how to manage him. But since this terrible shortage of money began four days ago, the man's got worried. He drinks all the time and he's after us every day. It's awful. We haven't done a stroke of business in these eight weeks. Still—just one little wringer? Take this one to your mother, Klaus. She'll like it."

"You got this wringer as a sample from the factory," said Klaus Baas, dryly.

Heini Peters admitted it. "It's all up with us, Klaus," he said. "It's a good thing the mason is a little dull and lets us stand him off. But how long will it last?"

As he was going on to say something more about his creditor, the door opened with a slow creak, and in came the mason, a little, undersized fellow, with tousled hair and sad, glittering eyes. He looked rather sick, and he was half drunk.

Heini Peters turned to him at once, told him he was looking fine, and introduced Klaus Baas as "a business friend of ours, who has his own firm here in town."

The mason, in his sad-eyed fashion, looked covetously at Klaus Baas's tall figure. He turned back immediately to Heini Peters, however, and whispered, with a melancholy look, "How is he?" pointing his thumb cautiously at Heini's partner.

Klaus Baas, following the direction of the thumb, saw that Herr Busch was marvellously changed. He was standing facing the wall, staring intently at the fly-covered paper, and waiting with his hand raised to strike the next fly. He held a regular dialogue with it, occasionally letting out low, wild cries. "Stay still! will you stay? swoop! — stay still! stay still! will you? swoop!"

With a worried look at the fly-catcher, Heini Peters said gloomily, "He isn't any better yet. The doctor says that he catches and kills wild ideas humming around in his brain, in the shape of these flies, and so the more flies he kills, the less often the bad thoughts come. At first he couldn't get along at all, but now he really gets some results. Just look! You mustn't say anything about this, Herr Bicker; it would hurt our credit. Look now — he's got another."

The little mason seated himself carefully on the chair which Klaus Baas had vacated, and with tears gleaming in his eyes, solemnly studied the fly-catcher.

Klaus Baas took his hat and went out, Heini Peters accompanying him.

When the door had closed behind him, Heini Peters laughed till he shook. Then he asked Klaus about the sexton and about the condition of the grave they had dedicated together six years before.

But Klaus Baas did not want to hear anything about that time or that place. "I really don't know anything about it," he said.

Suddenly Heini Peters was talking about the Süllberg. "I tell you, we certainly danced last Sunday — it was fine! And you ought to have seen how she thanked me — it was simply ravishing. On Sunday we're going to Ohlsdorf." Suddenly he sank into troubled meditation. "I don't know what's the matter with me," he said. "Think of it — a grave-digger that dances, and a dancer that jumps over graves!" He laughed heartily, and shook his head at his own happy speech. Then he turned sober again. "Say, Klaas Hinrich — it goes hard to ask it, but we haven't another way out. If you could just let us have a hundred marks — but I don't suppose you could or would?"

Klaus Baas shook his head. "I'm going to need all my money now myself, Heini!" he said curtly.

Heini Peters had already recovered his buoyancy. "Oh, all right, all right," he said cheerfully. "I just thought I'd ask you. No hard feelings, I hope. Come again soon."

Klaus Baas hurried on in order to reach the Exchange in good time. When he got to the Reesendamm he saw his old chief, Herr Trimborn, crossing the Jungfernstieg and hurrying toward the Exchange. Klaus had seen him occasionally in the last few years, but never to speak to. He bowed to him now. Since the way in which Herr Trimborn spoke to him assured him, according to signs he remembered from the office, that the chief was in a good humor, Klaus went up to him and made himself known.

Herr Trimborn remembered him, and asked politely where he had been and where he was going. Noticing that his young companion was rather reserved, he opened up a little more. "These are hard times, my dear Herr Baas," he said. "It's dreadful over in America. And here — Tewes and Gibbon! just think of it! A good old

firm like that. And there are all kinds of rumors, all kinds!" Suddenly he remembered Klaus Baas's connection with the firm of H. C. Eschen. "Oh, yes," he said, "you were over there? In the Straits for A. W. Thauler, weren't you? That's right. And I believe you were there for a while in the interests of H. C. Eschen also. And young Eschen died there, in your arms. Yes, yes, I remember very well. You two were friends when you were in my office together. That does you great credit, Herr Baas, certainly. Ah, yes — many a poor fellow lies over yonder! You got the mine there working, didn't you? Yes, so you did. Herr Wilhelm Thauler told me so at the time. A very good piece of work! Why didn't you come back to us after that, or else stay with A. W. Thauler?"

Klaus Baas told him that both he and Thauler had been away when he returned from India, and that an opening in the country had been offered to him. He added that he had earned a considerable sum and that he had now returned to Hamburg either to take up the management of a bank that had been offered to him, or, preferably, to buy an interest in some business.

Herr Trimborn, however, had no interest in listening to all that. He was a little deaf, and like most old people, he liked to keep to the original subject. "About the Eschen firm, Herr Baas — I was about to say that it's in a bad way. You know the head of it, Herr Arthur Eschen? His wife is slightly related to my cousin — an elegant woman, Herr Baas, Frau Eschen is — perhaps a little bit too elegant. Four weeks ago Herr Arthur Eschen and his wife went over to the Straits to look after their claims. And now his partner here, an elderly gentleman — by no means a bad sort, who held a position over there in eastern Asia for fifteen years and got into the firm with the money he earned there — well, he's very sick. Well! and now comes this shortage of money! A bad situation. The banks, you know, are not only holding fast to what they have; they are also calling in as much as they can. And H. C. Eschen works a great deal on credit — far too much



on credit, my dear Herr Baas. And besides, his household made so many demands. And why did his wife want to go along with him to India just now? All that has to be covered. So long as the market is good, it's all very well. But when a crisis comes, there's trouble. I'm not telling you any secret, Herr Baas. Yesterday people said openly that the firm had failed. At all events, they're in great straits. Herr Wilhelm Thauler, who was a friend of the dead Herr Eschen, the father, has consulted with the widow, Frau Eschen. Perhaps he can give you closer details if you are still interested in the old firm."

Klaus Baas listened tensely. Every word had its effect on him. What was all this? Was there a chance here—perhaps a big one? But could he do it? He had never directed a firm like that. And he had been out of business like that for six years. He could always be sure of a position like the one offered him at the bank. He would take hold of this other! He certainly knew the business; and he knew that Frau Eschen, Karl's mother, would have confidence in him. He had a right to offer himself! The mother knew that. And he would take hold! In it might lie success.

As the old man paused, Klaus Baas stood still. "Herr Trimborn," he said very deliberately, "I am going to try at once to get the necessary information about the firm of H. C. Eschen. Then I am going to see Frau Eschen and the sick partner. If I find that there is still any use in it, I shall place my ability and my little capital of forty thousand marks at the disposal of the firm. I am telling you this because I may have to ask for your advice and your recommendation."

The old gentleman was astounded. "Well, well, indeed!" he said. "To think that when I was talking to myself rather than to you, I should accomplish so much! Well, well! See here, Herr Baas. I'd be very glad indeed to see the old firm stand! How strange that I should meet you just then! That's probably an excellent idea, Herr Baas. It's just the thing for you. Herr Thauler will be glad to tell you all about it, of course." And he

kept on repeating, "Well, well!" and shaking his gray head, in the way of old people recognizing the way of the world, as he looked into the throngs pressing into the Exchange. He had seen many men pass through that door — many that never came there any more. Smitten by their own failures and by grave accidents as well, they had been pushed aside and then cast out by the hurrying stream of time.

Klaus Baas knew at once by the subdued buzz that there was news of some new misfortune. As he made his way slowly through the crowd, which was now taking shape, he heard here and there the name of a rather important export firm; and then, more loudly and distinctly, he caught the name of an old, distinguished bank. A heavy cloud seemed to rest upon the whole throng. There was no laughing or joking anywhere; no one was cheerful or smiling. Every face was still and drawn. All the men there had the same sober look and the same sober speculation: "Who will be the next? What all will happen now? If that firm can't hold out, who can? Can you?" Every man of them reflected sharply and suspiciously on how it stood with him, — on the probable security of the bank he was dealing with; on the present values of certain goods; on his business friends and creditors; in short, on every dark possibility that the morrow might bring forth — on his wife and children at home, and on his friends. In one place two elderly men, representatives of distinguished firms, and close acquaintances, were talking with low voices and subdued looks about this new catastrophe and its significance for this or that house. In another place sat an elderly man with a fine head, lost in deep thought, fairly overwhelmed by the failure of an old firm, three generations of which he had known. In the midst of the subdued hum of men and voices, he sat there pondering about the cause of it all, and thinking of his own firm and his children and grandchildren. Around the pillars were grouped a number of younger men whose aspect was less grave. Once in a while, scornfully, contemptuously, they muttered aspersions on the unspeakable

remissness of the two chiefs of the firms that had failed. They called to notice how much one, the younger of them, had paid for his establishment and how much his wife's clothes and his evenings at the club had cost. Not far from them a smug fellow, with his watch chain stretched tightly over his well rounded front, was delivering to a few neighbors words of wisdom on the subject of the third generation: "They can't get along any more! They aren't wide awake and alert! They don't do their own thinking!" Everywhere throughout the great hall little groups were whispering to each other the name of a firm that was in a bad way. In the stockbrokers' corner the crowd was pressing and pushing more wildly than anywhere else, calling out the quotations to one another, in lower voices, perhaps, but more excitedly. A small jobber, in a short gray jacket a good deal the worse for wear, was excitedly flourishing his notebook and offering things he did not have and could not be responsible for. The news of the failure of the big firms had gone to his head.

Klaus discovered the head of the Indian firm talking to an elderly man. The chief saw him and nodded. When he had finished his talk and saw that Klaus Baas was waiting to speak to him, he looked less cordial. He listened to his former employee with his eyes on the ground, only now and then turning them keenly on Klaus Baas. After briefly recalling his friendship with Karl Eschen, Klaus Baas asked how the firm of H. C. Eschen stood, and whether there would be any point in his placing himself at its disposal.

Herr Wilhelm Thauler looked out over the confused crowd, and then looked sharply into Klaus's face. "Why should the firm hope that your services could be of aid?" he asked.

"Because," Klaus Baas went on quickly and calmly, "if I hear that there is any prospect at all, I will bring to the firm my ability, — I was a good worker, I think, — my knowledge of the firm's affairs, and forty thousand marks of my own money."

Stepping back out of the crowd a little, Herr Thauler

said irritably, but more frankly, "The firm has heavy liabilities. Two notes of fifty thousand marks each and one of forty thousand fall due to-morrow. Otherwise, so far as I have been able to determine, the affairs of the firm are not bad. The assets, I think, are good. But what does that amount to? What the banks want is money. If Herr Eschen himself were here, perhaps it would be all right. The family is an old one, and everybody pities the mother. But the worst thing about it all, Herr Baas, the thing that makes it all look unpromising, is that Herr Arthur Eschen is a good deal to blame."

Klaus thought a few minutes. "Wouldn't it satisfy the banks if I were to put in my earnings and my work, which you and Herr Trimborn could recommend?"

"I know absolutely that it would not satisfy them," answered Herr Thauler, coolly. "The banks will let the firm fail if the notes for one hundred and forty thousand marks aren't redeemed at once. And after those are attended to, there are further difficulties."

For a moment Klaus Baas wondered whether it would not be worth while to make the attempt with the banks, anyway; then he reflected that it would be far better for his own purposes and for the firm, too, if these first liabilities could be fully met. Arthur Eschen would have to give him a good deal of credit for doing that. "If I get together one hundred and twenty thousand marks," he asked boldly, "can I count on you for the other twenty thousand?"

Herr Wilhelm Thauler looked gloomily into the crowd. "That's asking too much, Herr Baas," he said. "Who knows what times we may be running into?"

"But you would be doing it for the dead father," said Klaus Baas, firmly and guardedly, in the manner of a man taking hold of a piece of Venetian glass. "I am doing it for the son, who was my friend."

The merchant looked at him quietly. "You're doing it for yourself," he retorted coolly. "And you haven't done it yet, either. Where are you going to get one hundred and twenty thousand marks? The partner is sick. And

I know that you have just come from the country and haven't the necessary connections. What is more, I hardly know you." He turned to go, asking over his shoulder, "Do you want anything else from me?"

"I hope," said Klaus Baas, "that Frau Eschen will give me her confidence without any recommendations. By her dead son's letters she knows that he thought a great deal of me, and you know that though he was very young, Karl Eschen was a good business man. But for the banks I should probably have to refer to you. May I come to see you about it to-morrow at twelve?"

Just then the head of one of the banking firms which Herr Thauler had mentioned as creditors of H. C. Eschen passed by, and spoke to Thauler. "There," said Thauler to Klaus, "you can try your luck at once."

The head of the bank stopped and looked at Klaus, who put his momentous question. But the head did not wait till he had finished. "We can't do anything at all for H. C. Eschen," he said coldly. "We have no power to do so. They must show what they can do for themselves."

With a short nod of acknowledgment, Klaus Baas stepped back. Turning again to Herr Thauler, he said, "May I come to see you at twelve to-morrow?"

"Yes, Herr Baas, if there's still any point in coming."

Klaus Baas turned and went out. He took a street-car, and fifteen minutes later he was standing in the midst of the dark, shiny oil paintings on the Mittelweg. Frau Eschen, now a rather stout, fine-looking matron, came in. Her lips were trembling, and her eyes showed that she had been weeping. She recognized him at once, and listened to what he had to say, her eyes fixed upon him all the time.

When he had finished, she got up and began to pace up and down the room, weeping quietly and calling her dead son's name, as if she yearned for his advice in this time of trouble. Then recovering herself, she gave Klaus her hand and sat down in front of him. She did not know a soul that could help her, she said. Besides the money that was in the firm, she had only a very modest little private fortune which, by her husband's wish and her own, she

was to keep for her youngest daughter, Sanna. Yesterday she and Uncle Eberhard, the seal collector, whom Klaus would probably remember, had discussed all the possible sources of aid and had found none that promised anything. She had been to see the other partner, but he was seriously ill and of no use in this case. Then she showed Klaus a despatch from India to the firm, which the bookkeeper had translated and sent to her that morning. It read, "Am making over twenty thousand marks to the bank to-day. If you need anything, go to Thauler." So there were twenty thousand marks, in addition to his forty thousand. That left eighty thousand still to be raised.

Klaus Baas asked her for a personal recommendation which he could give to the partner, whom he meant to see.

When he had it, he asked politely after the family. The mother told him, with a fresh burst of weeping, that her oldest daughter Trude had died several years before in Mexico, after only a short period of happy married life. Sanna, the younger daughter, the one he had once transferred to another bed, had been in England for some weeks with friends of theirs, making herself useful teaching German. The old mother of Herr Eschen, Frau Eschen's dead husband, whom Klaus had seen in the former days, was still living, and was still deluded by her old idea that her sons were simply off on a trip and were all doing well. She was almost ninety years old now, and was very near her end; she might go any day, in fact.

Klaus only half listened to the story the handsome, kindly woman was telling him tearfully. Promising to come back in the course of a day, he left.

He went straight to the partner's house, where he was received by a maid, and told that the gentleman was sick and could not see any one. Klaus Baas asked several questions about the sick man's condition and whether he had given her these orders himself. He sent in Frau Eschen's recommendation, but the maid came back and said that he was too sick to receive it. Then, pushing the girl aside, Klaus made his way into the room, spoke for a minute or

two to the man's sad, quiet wife, and then went up to the sick man's bedside.

He was an elderly man, with a bald head and a pointed beard. It seemed to Klaus that he was more confused than sick — really beside himself, in fact. He dealt with him very gently and cautiously, and finally got him to the point of listening, at least. Klaus told him about his former connection with the Eschen firm, about Karl Eschen, about the sixty thousand marks he had on hand, and about the talk he had had with Herr Trimborn and Herr Thauler, who were hopeful about the firm's chances. He finally succeeded in getting him to the point of raising himself on his elbows and going into a mournful story about how he had worked so faithfully and industriously for Brodersen and Company for fifteen years in Shanghai and on the Yangtse. And how he had come back home, planning to live in peace in his dear old home city Hamburg on the eighty thousand marks he had earned so honestly and laboriously, and on a small position in some sort of office. And then the devil and his foolish ambition had persuaded him to become first procurist and then partner in the H. C. Eschen firm, which had always had such a good name. But since that time he hadn't had a single hour of peace, for the firm was always overreaching itself. And now all these dreadful thunderbolts had to drop all together out of a clear sky — the terrible shortage of money and of credit; great consignments of goods on hand that were absolutely unsalable at present; the chief in India, and he himself sick!

Klaus Baas put a stop to the tale of woe by taking out a memorandum book and jotting down figures, names, and dates. Now and then he asked a few personal questions, and cautiously advanced tentative propositions.

Getting back his spirits a little, the sick man asked for his own note-book, and began to say what would be possible and what would not. As he recovered his will power, he seemed to think it necessary to excuse himself. "You see," he said, with a long, deep sigh of hope, "I've been a good honest worker, and I still am — I can say that for

myself. And I've a thoroughly practical way of looking at things, and some initiative, too. But I lack two things: I haven't any confidence in my own convictions, and need some one else to assume the leadership and responsibility. And I haven't the gift of dealing cleverly with people, especially in a ticklish situation like this. Do you know, now that you're here, I feel easier. You've got something kind of encouraging about you. If you're willing to put in your forty thousand, I'll put mine in, no matter how hard it is for me. And I'll write a little note for you to take at once to a lady — an old friend of mine. I was friends with her and her husband during all the years I spent in Shanghai. He was a strong fellow, and he earned a tidy fortune, but he died over there, and his wife came home. I think she will do it for me."

"How much is she worth?" asked Klaus Baas.

"Two hundred — three hundred thousand marks, perhaps, — I don't really know. But, Herr Baas, I can't guarantee that she will let us have more than twenty thousand."

"Thirty thousand," said Klaus Baas, with an encouraging nod.

Rapidly recovering, the partner wrote the note, saying, as he did so, that he hoped he could get to the office in the morning.

"I don't know —" he said tearfully. "I'm beginning to think of some other things, too. Perhaps if I were to write to my former chief — if he can be made to see the situation — I served his firm for fifteen years, and five of them I spent absolutely alone in a hut on the Yangtse."

They arranged that instructions should be sent to the office to have the bookkeeper remain there all night; and they agreed upon an answer to the despatch from India. Then Klaus left.

He took a cab to an imposing apartment on the ground floor on the Grindelhof. Here he found a withered old lady in black silk, sitting at a little table of fine Chinese workmanship, playing cards with an old servant who looked as if she had come straight from Wedel or Quick-



born, and had never been out of Holstein in her life. The old lady read the letter, while the old servant went to sleep immediately, with her cards in her hand. Klaus Baas looked closely at the old lady's sallow little face and her thin hands bedecked with rings. When she commiserated her old friend's situation, Klaus gave a pitiable description of the state he was in. It was not to be expected that a lady of her age, who had lived, moreover, for twenty-five years in Shanghai among ambitious men, would at once hand over to Klaus Baas a check for the thirty thousand marks required. But she got up at once, with a great rustling of silk skirts, which awakened the old servant. In the hall the old lady put on her bonnet and cloak, the servant doing the same. Klaus Baas, fearing that if she went straight to her friend, he might lessen the sum out of over-conscientiousness, arranged, on the ground that it was a matter of haste, that she should go first to the bank and then to her friend's. Then he left them.

Sitting in the street-car, he laughed heartily to himself. "Well, if any one had told me yesterday what I would be doing to-day!" he thought. "Now to Uncle Eberhard! I hope he still remembers the fine talk we had about the Dithmarsch coats of arms."

He found Uncle Eberhard in his modest flat pacing restlessly up and down, while his dinner was rapidly getting cold on the table. In his sixties now, he seemed to Klaus greatly aged. His housekeeper, a gentle, kindly looking woman of fifty or more, was sitting at the end of the table, looking much concerned. Klaus Baas made himself known, saying that he had come from Frau Eschen and from the partner. Then he stopped on account of the housekeeper's presence, until Herr Eschen told him to go on. "It's all right. We've been together for fifteen years," he said, looking at Klaus with big, anxious eyes. Klaus set forth how matters stood, what he had undertaken to do, and what he had so far accomplished. Meanwhile the housekeeper quietly cleared the table.

When Klaus Baas had finished, Uncle Eberhard said, with a deep sigh, "Then you think it's still possible to save it?"

“If we can lay down one hundred and forty thousand in cold cash to-morrow, there is hope that we can pull through the rest of the hard times. I have ninety thousand now. Do you know any one that would help out for the sake of the firm, or of Frau Eschen?”

Uncle Eberhard walked up and down the room, stood still, looked despairingly at every corner of the room, and finally said anxiously: “Besides the sixty thousand marks which, as you know, I have in the firm, I have also about forty thousand. My dear Herr Baas! you certainly don’t want me to see the day when I’ll be walking along with my elbows patched and my shoes all out of shape, on the Jungfernstieg, where my great-grandfather walked as a senator?” Standing in front of Klaus Baas, he looked at him with tears in his eyes.

Just then the housekeeper, with a light tap on Klaus’s sleeve, pointed to a cup of tea which she had placed before him. Klaus paid no attention to it, but seating himself more firmly in his chair, to indicate that he was not weakening, he kept his eyes fixed upon his victim. “I don’t want your whole forty thousand,” he said, “but I do want part of it. And then you must tell me where I can try for more.”

The neat little fellow shook his head helplessly. “What do I know about it?” he said, “and what can I do to help — and what am I, anyway? I’ve been a dead man for thirty years, — ever since I left my cousin’s business. Nobody knows me, and I don’t know anybody. It’s simply awful. Here you — a stranger, that’s been looking into the business for about four hours, — you know more about it than I do! What if my old father could see that!” and sitting down, he covered his face with his hands.

But Klaus Baas sat there, coldly speculating on taking ten thousand and then going on to hunt more. As he was looking around casually, his eyes happened to fall on a sort of cabinet with a lot of shallow drawers, and he wondered idly what was in them. Suddenly it flashed upon him — the collection of seals, of course. With the scorn of a man who loves the life of the present, its

struggles and its gains, with all the glad intensity of passionate youth, and who joys in being a part of it, he asked, "Are you still collecting seals, Herr Eschen?"

The little man started. "Yes, Herr Baas," he said, almost in a whisper, "and if it's necessary — Herr Baas! The truth is, — it's been tormenting me ever since you came in, — I can get twelve thousand marks for the collection any day. On a lower floor in this very house an old retired colonel lives. I think he moved into this house just because he's got his eye on my collection."

"Well, then," said Klaus Baas to himself, "we'll make it twenty thousand."

Just then the housekeeper, who had been busy in the next room, appeared at the door and asked Herr Eschen to come out for a moment. The little man looked up at her in amazement and followed her out of the room, leaving Klaus Baas sitting there reckoning and pondering.

A little later Uncle Eberhard returned, closing the door gently behind him, as if he were closing the cage on a canary. He sank into a chair, speechless. Then he said in some embarrassment: "My housekeeper has just made me a proposal. She wouldn't like to see me sell my collection, so she offers me all her little fortune of fifteen thousand marks — and she thinks — she thinks — since we've been living together already for fifteen years —" he sat for a moment, without speaking, wringing his hands and shaking his head. At last he said, "Well, why shouldn't we be married? It's about the same thing, after all. And I've never done anything else for the firm — all I've ever done is to take my interest. I've really never, never done anything for it."

"We'll take the fifteen thousand marks," said Klaus Baas, "and the collection, too. But we won't sell it; we'll see whether we can't borrow money on it."

"But if the money should be lost!" said the little man, shaking his head disconsolately.

"Well, then, the forty thousand will still be left, Herr Eschen. You can buy an annuity with it, if it won't do any other way."

The old man considered querulously. "They are in Hamburg city bonds," he said. "If they should turn out worthless, too —"

"Oh, well," said Klaus Baas, indifferently, "if the sky falls, all the sparrows will be killed, of course." Then, getting up, and asking the housekeeper to come in, he explained everything to her. With all her shyness and delicacy, she showed that she had a clear head, and that she had long been the gentle ruler, not only of the little household, but of the little man as well. She promised that she herself would bring the amount of her bank account to the office at ten the next morning. Then she went downstairs with him to see the old colonel who had his eye on the seals.

Klaus Baas found a thick-set, elderly, energetic looking fellow sitting comfortably with his newspaper. Recognizing his little neighbor, he sprang up nimbly. As he listened to them, he laughed gayly, and slapped his leg at the idea of being able to make a deal at last. At first he wouldn't hear of a mortgage; it must be nothing short of a sale. But when Klaus threatened to dispose of the collection elsewhere that very day, the old man, with many demurs, finally agreed to the mortgage. He stipulated, however, that the cabinet was to be left there with him, unlocked. "He's such a suspicious, particular little chap," he said; "he'll be worried to death for fear I steal something. And it's quite possible that I may. Seal collecting is a good deal like horse trading; a little swindling is allowed." The document was drawn up as quickly as possible, and the money made over. Then Klaus Baas took leave of the old gentleman, who was still laughing and scolding alternately. And outside on the stairs he said good-by to the housekeeper, whose little face, in spite of her fifty odd years, was covered with a light flush.

He went next to Altona, to find a friend of his, a confidential employee of the bank at home. He was a man of very little education, who, through native shrewdness and cleverness, had attained a considerable fortune. Luckily finding him at home, Klaus told him what he had under-

taken and asked him for ten thousand marks, for which he would give his note. He got the money.

From there, he went to the office on Katherine Strasse to telephone to his bank about making over his own funds in ready money. He also sent a message to Frau Eschen to say how he was getting along. Toward evening he routed the partner out of bed, and sat all night with him and the procurist, going over books, accounts, and letters. He got a general survey of the situation of the firm, did a great deal of reckoning and considering, and then carefully composed a telegram destined to make the chief in India realize the state of affairs so far as was possible. He wrote letters to several small pressing creditors. No matter how much he tried to evade the fact, he knew that money had been scraped up from every available quarter, and he pondered whether there was any possible way by which he could collect the fifteen thousand marks still lacking.

In the course of the morning, the anxiously awaited sums that he had raised came gradually in. He stood at the window watching, heavy-eyed,—it was the second night he had not slept,—looking down the Fleet and up toward the Nikolai tower, invisible in the cloud and mist. As he waited, he pondered how he could raise the last fifteen thousand marks, and could see no other way than to go to A. W. Thauler, or to ask the bank for grace on this balance. Both of these courses offended his pride and his judgment. A little before twelve, however, when the rest of the money had all come in, he put on his coat to go to Thauler.

Just then, to his great surprise, Frau Eschen came into the office. Her face was very pale, and she looked worn out from lack of sleep and much weeping. She sat down, exhausted and breathless. Fumbling in her bosom, she brought out a bundle of bank-notes, which she laid on her son's desk, beside which Klaus was standing. "I didn't want to be just crying and looking on while you were taking so much trouble about our affairs," she said, in a deeply moved voice, while her mouth trembled. "I went to see an old acquaintance of mine,—a man that once

wanted to be more closely related ; I couldn't do it, and he went away hurt. I have talked to him now for the first time in thirty years. But what wouldn't a person do for children and old days ! And he might just as well help me ; I've had little enough happiness in my married life !" Shaking her head at her own emotion and weakness, she said by way of apology : " I've been worried and up all night. My old mother is very sick — nearly dying."

Klaus had respectfully taken her hand. He patted it, and tried to cheer up the poor worn-out woman by telling her how invaluable this last money was. The first difficulty was over now, he said, and he believed that he could put the thing through. With talk of this kind, he accompanied her, still weeping, to the stairs.

Then he sent the money to the bank, and followed it himself.

The two managers of the bank were standing at the window, talking earnestly. They were impolite enough not to offer Klaus a chair. This robust, farmer-like man, who came to them commissioned by the firm of H. C. Eschen and Company, was already known to them very casually by his connection with the little country bank. Klaus Baas told them that he had got the one hundred and forty thousand marks together, and that after examination he found that the firm was secure. " You gentlemen are a little sharp with H. C. Eschen," he went on good-humoredly.

The more elderly of the two got a little more human, and made several general remarks about the condition of the market, the responsibility of the bank, and so on.

Wishing to make a good impression for the firm, Klaus said reservedly : " It's an old firm, the chief is abroad, and the second partner is sick. All this came as a surprise."

The younger man answered with some show of respect that they wanted to do their part, but that in times like these they had to make sure whether a firm had any backing of its own, and how much.

Klaus agreed to that amicably, thereby establishing himself and the firm on the ground of perfect respectabil-

ity. To their discreet questions, he answered that he was an old friend of the firm who happened to have time to devote a few months to it. He talked to them a little longer about the general situation, and then left, hoping that he had impressed these clever men, whose confidence and regard he would need later, as a man who knew what he was about.

From there he went to the Exchange. He told Herr Thauler and Herr Trimborn that the firm of H. C. Eschen had good hopes. Then he went to several old acquaintances of his and told them that he had undertaken the management of the firm for several months, and that the firm was prepared to meet its obligations fully. Merrily and a bit boastfully, and under the seal of silence, he told an acquaintance whom he knew to be a rogue and a chatterer about the partner who had gone fairly crazy with the worry and confusion, and told how he had dragged him out of bed.

Toward evening he set off to tell Frau Eschen how much had been done. He was shown into the front room by the maid, who had evidently received instructions, and left alone. After a while she came back and told him that Madame Eschen was very sick. Frau Eschen would like to see him, however, if he could wait a little longer. When he had waited a while longer, the girl came back and said that Frau Eschen, tired out from having been up all night, had had a fainting fit, and that she would like him to come into the sick-room.

It was the same white-curtained room where, ten years before, the old lady had sat at the window; now she was lying there on her bed, breathing irregularly, almost imperceptibly. Her daughter-in-law, sitting in a big chair beside the bed, gave Klaus her hand in silent greeting. "I tried to come to you," she said in a low voice, "but when I went to get up quickly, my knees suddenly gave way. Otherwise I am all right."

He told her his good news, which she rewarded with a long look of heart-felt esteem and gratitude. Then he asked her if he could stay and be of any use to her.

Their whispered conversation awakened the old lady. Casting a long, sad, weary glance toward the man at the bedside, she asked him her same old question, in her high, thin voice, with a sort of forced cheerfulness. "Have you seen my children, my good sir?" Without waiting for an answer, however, she drowsed off again. Klaus Baas persuaded Frau Eschen to go lie down, promising to keep watch with her maid and to call her as soon as there was any change. The worn-out woman allowed herself to be persuaded, and let the solicitous maid lead her into the next room.

Then he kept watch in the little room for several hours, now standing beside the bed listening to the old woman's breathing, now standing in front of her old bookcase with its red-bound classics. He remembered having heard her grandson tell, under the swaying punkah by the Indian Ocean, how this woman that was now dying had, as a child, seen old Klopstock, neatly attired in wig and knee-breeches, in the street at Altona, and how she had called out a childish greeting to Goethe in the street at Weimar and had received a kindly greeting in return. But after all, how did this old woman concern him, Klaus Baas? She had had her share of good and evil in life, and now she must die. Now the race was to others — to such as he! He must think of his own affairs — of his great undertaking! Would the day ever come when he would be one of the proprietors of that firm? He went to the bed and looked down at the dying woman again with eyes tired out with watching.

As the night advanced, her sleep became more restless, and she mumbled indistinctly. The girl awakened Frau Eschen, who came in at once.

Bending over, she saw that the sick woman's eyes looked clearer than they had before. "Do you feel better, mother?" she asked. Receiving no answer, she became alarmed, and asked for the lamp.

The old woman closed her eyes, then opened them again. And in the lamplight they could see an expression of mild surprise and recognition on her face. Closing her eyes



and opening them once more, she asked in a tired, but absolutely natural voice: "Aren't you Marianne, Karl's wife? How is it you have gray hair?"

With hot tears streaming down her cheeks, Frau Eschen answered in a trembling voice, "Yes, mother, do you know me?"

The old lady looked hard at the counterpane as if she were looking for something that she could not find. Then, raising her eyes slowly, she said in her old weak voice, in an unspeakably dubious, hesitating tone, "How is the firm getting along?"

"It's all right still, mother."

"But where is my husband?"

"He died long ago, mother."

She stared at the counterpane again, hunting around with restless, groping hands. Then she looked up again.

"Where is my son Edward?"

"He died a long time ago, mother. He was lost with the frigate *Frauenlob*."

The old woman looked up again, this time with more assurance.

"But where is my son Karl, your husband?"

"He died a long time ago, too, mother," answered Frau Eschen, weeping.

The old lady's head sank still lower, and her trembling hands groped among the covers. "You have four children, haven't you?" she said, in a lower voice.

"Yes, mother, but two of them are dead. Gertrude died in Mexico, and Karl in India. The two that are living are away."

The old lady looked down again, and lay there tired and silent. Finally she said, in a tone of great weariness, but of sublime, almost august composure, "Since they are all gone, I will go too." She tried to clasp her daughter's hand, but could not. Then she fell asleep, and lay there, breathing more and more gently, until she passed away.

Then Klaus Baas left the house and went through the streets in the gray dawn toward his mother's.

She was already working away by lamplight, sitting among heaps of materials. She was in her sixties now, and was gray-haired, but she was still as harsh as when she drove him home from the churchyard with the tongs. On the day he left the little town he had written her about the change in his married life and his prospects. She received him now as she always had since he grew up — with the scorn that his confidence in himself and his ambition, the traditional Baas failings, always prompted in her. “Well, so they turned you out up there,” she said. “I suspected that’s what would happen.”

He laughed at what she said, and at her usual distrustful tone. “But think of the experiences I’ve had since then,” he said, “and of all the places I’ve been !”

“They’ve probably turned you out everywhere,” she said, “and that’s why you’ve come to me.”

“Not a bit of it — they received me well everywhere I went,” he answered. “At Peter’s, at — well, I can’t tell you that — but everywhere I went, they treated me fine. All day and all night yesterday I was working for H. C. Eschen; the firm was in a critical state. I — I put it on its feet again. Well, then — what now, mother?” He sat down opposite her, laid his clenched hand on the table, and looked at her with tired, passionate eyes.

“Good heavens !” she said, in a tone of surprise and scornful severity. “You had your nose in the sand a minute ago, and now you’re up on the heights again already !”

He looked at her steadily, with his eyes half closed. “I’ve prospered famously in the last three days, mother,” he said; “in scorn and harshness, in generosity and pride, in loyalty and self-interest. I’ve been in the bed of a beautiful girl, and at the death-bed of a gray old woman. I’ve had experiences of every sort, mother ! I have all my father’s kindness and joy in life, and all your severity, masterfulness, and energy. And I’ve let all the qualities that were born in me play out. If a man doesn’t do that, mother, he doesn’t get anywhere. If he can’t play his own fiddle, how will he get others to play with him ?”

She answered him with a severe, almost gloomy look. "How can you be so noisy, and in such high spirits, if you've just come from a death-bed?"

"How does that affect me, mother?" he said coldly. "I didn't do it for the sake of the dead. I did it for myself. What do the dead matter to me!"

"Exactly!" she said drearily. "They mean nothing to you! And I—I think of them day and night!" With a sudden movement, she put her hands to her eyes and wept bitterly. Then recovering herself quickly, she told him to go to bed.

He stroked her smooth gray hair. In a tone that was quieter, but still firm, he said: "Good night, mother. I'm unspeakably tired," and with uneven, almost staggering steps, he went out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXI

THE task he had undertaken was no easy one; sometimes, indeed, he thought that he could not see it through. He contrived to write letters to India which plainly, yet discreetly, made clear that they had been on the point of failing. He said that they had all really been in despair, but that the firm was now safe for the present—not only its funds, but also, owing to tactful management, its business reputation. Klaus also went through some difficult moments when he read the answers from India, and, as a result of them, had for a second time to establish this or that point, with great discretion to be sure, but with a good deal of confidence in his own management as well.

He had got considerably out of touch with things in these six years; many things had changed or had been entirely replaced. He had to ask many questions, and look up a great many places. He had more to do than other men, and he worked more slowly. It took weeks for him to get a satisfactory grip on the business. The partner continued to be ailing and apprehensive, and was away for a great part of the time.

There were some hard months, when the light in the office on Katherine Strasse burned far into the night. Lying on the hard bed he had had put up for him in the merchandise room, unable to sleep, Klaus kept getting more and more sure that he had ruined not only his little fortune, but his reputation and his future as well. In hours like these he complained bitterly of his fate. Hadn't his childhood and youth been ten times harder than that of children of well-to-do parents? And hadn't he meant to help his dead friend's mother? And now to go to pieces doing it! But when morning came he tackled

with wisdom and despatch the difficult problems that came up daily. He sent to India letters full of calm assurances and cautious proposals, in order to keep Arthur Eschen away as long as possible. To the partner he said continually, "Come now, you're looking bad again. Go on out and take a walk." He wanted to keep him away from the business, and at the same time to keep his good-will.

Sometimes he went to report to Frau Eschen. He would have liked to spend all his spare time among the familiar pictures with the lonely woman whose talk showed so much sound common sense. But reasoning that he ought to hold back a little, he went there only once a week. He talked to her respectfully and spontaneously, in the way that became a real Baas best; and every time she welcomed him cordially, talking to him about the business situation, about the return of her son and his wife, about her dead, and about his early life. Attracted by his discretion, she gradually became more confidential, and one day brought out the family photographs to show him. Holding in his hand two photographs, one of Gertrude at twelve and one of Sanna at six, he told her about his own childhood, — how he had cleaned the brushes, and how Gertrude had planted her foot on his neck, and how he had warmed little Sanna's bottle. She smiled tearfully, looked at the pictures, then at him, and recalled that the children had talked about him. She got up to get the picture Sanna had sent from England. "Sanna is a little precocious," she said, as she praised her daughter's healthy, straightforward nature, "just like all the rest of my children. I suppose it comes from my having made companions of them when they were so young. But really, I don't know what would have become of me if I hadn't." Much moved, Klaus looked at the small oval face, with its strong mouth and big bright eyes, which showed soul as well as cleverness. Slowly handing it back to the mother, he said, "She's getting more like her mother all the time." Then, by an unconscious association of ideas, he began to tell her about his past, and especially about his marriage.

As he left, he felt pleased that she had been so cordial;

then he immediately began to torment himself by imagining that she had not been cordial enough, that after all she did not regard him as one of her own class. He thought that he had noticed a great difference lately in the way she treated a young man of her acquaintance who had called on her while Klaus was there. He thought that she had shown herself more at ease with the confident young man, who chatted along so easily about many of their common acquaintances, and who asked for "Sanna" in the most natural way in the world. Gloomy and discontented, he brooded angrily over it all. How Frau Eschen would look, he thought, if he were to win Sanna some day! And then think of her brother, and that elegant creature, his wife! Of course he'd be likely to pass with Sanna herself! No doubt of it. What a face she had—and those big bright eyes. He remembered her as she had been—full of life, composed, and wilful. She was a real woman; and he—well, he was a real man, and he knew what calls out a woman's love. She would see it—she is lovely and healthy, he thought. But what good, after all, will that do me: I've got to bear the burden of my different childhood, and of the fact that I'm not a man of "family."

On a dull day in December, Arthur Eschen and his wife returned from India.

The aristocratic, somewhat frail-looking man showed a sort of English coolness and indolence which was rather a matter of speech and movement, perhaps, than of character. He was uncertain just how to treat this robust, business-like man, who possessed such manifest composure, discretion, and breadth of view. He realized that this man had kept together his fortune and his business standing at a time when all his own family had lost their heads, and when he himself, the responsible member, had calmly gone abroad without taking into account the possibility of hard times. With not too much cordiality, he told Klaus Baas that by a strange chance he had again played a part in the fortunes of the family. Going on to speak of the business side of the matter, which was "not

without its difficulties," he proposed a temporary arrangement by which Klaus Baas should receive a small fixed salary, a definite share of the profits, and a good interest for the money he had put into the business. Nothing was said about making Klaus procurist. The arrangement was rather provisional, but Klaus thought it wise to accept it for the present without more ado.

The arrival of the chief made a great deal of new work. It was evident that he himself had been busy over in India. During the first part of the time, which he spent at Singapore, it was true that not much had happened. But the sinister telegram, sent off to him early on the morning of the seventh of March, had spurred to action all his native business capacity. Up to this time the firm had been sending out all kinds of manufactured wares; but now Herr Eschen had assured himself that of late there had been a demand for metals too, and that there was a good chance for business in that line. He set out to make the same attempt his father had once made with some result — namely, to include in his business the raw materials, the tin, copper, and spices to be found there. With this end in view, he contrived a new arrangement with a firm in Singapore. In the accomplishment of things of this sort the winter passed. The associate partner, who was still ailing, and who seemed not to have recovered from the shock he had had in the spring, by a tacit understanding with Klaus Baas withdrew more and more from the actual work and the councils of the firm. And at his desk, near the door of the main office, sat Klaus Baas, very reserved, very discreet in word and deed. And well he might be, for he did not know in the least whether he would be left sitting there, or whether some day, when Arthur Eschen had got his hand in again, and had perhaps found more money and a new man, he would not be sent away with his little capital, a "very reasonable recompense," and many thanks. Klaus did not like the prospect. To be compelled to relinquish this plan now, when he was thirty-two, might have unfortunate consequences for him. If it happened, he could do one

of two things : either take Herr Arthur Eschen's recommendation and look around for a place as manager or bookkeeper, or hunt up a partner and establish a little firm of his own with small capital, little credit, and slight reputation.

Twice in the course of the winter he was invited to the handsome house in Harvestehude, where he was courteously received, and with cordial slaps on the back presented to the gentlemen there as "Herr Baas, who helped us out while I was away." Klaus realized that the wife regarded him merely as a bookkeeper who had happened to be out of work and who had made good in this opportunity, — in short, as a man whom circumstances made it necessary for her to honor with an invitation. He observed, too, that she went out of her way to entertain a certain man who, he had heard, had a very considerable capital and who was desirous of going into some good business.

Thinking of all this, Klaus often went home to his mother in a bad temper. And she, as usual, humbled him still more. "Well, I guess you've sat down in the nettles again," she would say, with her scornful little laugh, which, however, as she grew older, showed a suspicion of kindness. "You're always full of grand schemes, and then suddenly you find that there's a leak somewhere. That's the way it was when you hurried home from the barge in the Hamburg harbor, and when you went to Heisterberg to get married to Suse Garbens, and when you came home from India, and again last year. That's the way it's going to be again." And she looked him up and down with her steady gray eyes as if she already saw him going around threadbare.

Then he grew a bit boastful. "Well, haven't I done pretty well? Why, if I want to, I can buy a farm in Heisterberg now. Has there ever been a Baas that had as much money at thirty-two as I have — or one that's got up as far? Look at me. And some day I'm going to be —"

"Some day you're going to be a senator," she said, with a nod, bending her calm gray eyes upon him.



Then he broke out laughing, and went up to her and patted her cheek. His bit of boasting cheered him up and put him in a good humor.

Hanna, whose head, with its wealth of straight bright hair, peeped out above her heap of school-books, looked smilingly at the two, who had such a queer way of showing how fond they were of each other.

But when Klaus went to bed at night he fell to thinking again about what he could do to prevent his being forced out of the road to success on which he was now. Young Frau Eschen was no friend of his, that was plain. And Arthur Eschen was pretty well under his wife's influence. The mother, Frau Marianne Eschen, was certainly well disposed toward him; but he did not feel at all certain that her good-will would go far enough to make her want him, with his little capital, as a partner in the firm, simply because the firm needed a good business man. It was perfectly true that Arthur Eschen's zeal for work did not go very far, and that it was falling off again, now that he was back in the social life of Hamburg. And even if Frau Eschen wanted it, she couldn't bring it to pass if her son opposed it. That was the way the thing stood, — and it looked bad. When he had thought it out up to that point, he recalled Sanna Eschen's big, sparkling eyes, which he studied now and then in the picture that stood on the table under the old oil paintings. Those shining eyes, so strangely clear and independent, seemed to say, "I know very well what I want!" Well, what did she want, — that serious, intelligent girl of twenty-three? She must have received some offer or other already. But it could not have come from a real man — a wise, capable fellow, superior to her. For a man like that she was still waiting, — composedly, if a little impatiently.

The next Sunday, when he went as usual to see Frau Eschen between five and six, and asked casually for Fräulein Sanna, she laughingly handed him a letter which she had received from her the day before. In the bold, free handwriting which was coming to be used by the girls of that time — for this was the time when girls were getting

more freedom, and when the best of them were coming to be personalities, even in their youth — Fräulein Sanna told all kinds of things in a direct, refreshing way. She had an opinion to pass on everything she had seen or heard. Then she said that she was glad she was going to be home with her own dear mother in a month. At the very last she wrote, "What's all this about your Klaas Hinrich Baas? Gracious, just think how a person can change! Has he still got that head of mole-colored hair? That was the only nice thing about him."

Klaus laughed heartily. "She's a great rogue," he said. "I must see that she respects me."

"I think she does now," her mother said, "and that's the reason she's bantering you."

"I would ask you to remember me to the young lady, if she weren't so impolite. Please tell her that."

So, he thought, Sanna Eschen was coming back from England, and was interesting herself in him! Sanna Eschen could help him!

He conducted himself with great wisdom and discretion in the office, in order to keep his relations with the Eschen firm in their present condition. The days slipped by slowly. During the day he had no time to think of anything but work, but when night came he walked home slowly and silently, often taking a roundabout way over the Lombards-Brücke, always picturing to himself the future. It is not unusual for men of strong will and independent nature, when they are not satisfied with the particular people and forces that are controlling their lives at the time, to calmly — and naïvely — draw for sustenance upon the whole world outside them, and by their own will, associate themselves with the life and will of the great world. So it was with Klaus Baas. Wrinkling his brow, he managed to convince himself more and more each day that Sanna Eschen existed for him, was coming home for him, in order that his life might proceed smoothly, as it ought. And oh, what a life it would be then!

One evening, as he was walking home pondering

and dreaming, as usual, he was brought to himself suddenly.

Just as he was about to go with one bound up the steps in the Wex Strasse, he spied Kalli Dau coming down from upstairs.

They had not seen each other for six years, and had not heard from each other very often. Since Kalli Dau had left as mate for the Chinese coast, he had sent a post card to Hanna now and then, and she had answered it. Kalli Dau's communications had been something like this: he had just come ashore and was sitting around in the taverns. And feeling kind of bored, and happening to see a picture post card, he happened to think he would drop her a line. He asked how she was, and how her mother and Klaus were. Then he signed himself, at first as second officer, then as first officer, and finally, a year before, as Karl Dau, Captain, S.S. *Amoy*. Then Hanna answered something like this: the long-tailed parrots were still in the corner of the room; they were all well; her big brother was engaged in importing and selling wood in a Holstein town. Then in her neat, teacherly hand, she signed herself, Hanna Baas, teacher in the Sixth Public School.

Grasping each other's shoulders, Kalli and Klaus shook each other in great joy, each exclaiming how well the other was looking. Klaus Baas tried to get his friend to go to the flat with him again, but he could not persuade him to. Suddenly looking downcast, Kalli explained, "I brought in a steamer to be repaired, thinking that I could stay here for eight weeks; but here they told me at the office yesterday that they were going to give me the new steamer, that's waiting here, booked to sail on Sunday. Of course I've got to take it. So off I go again on Sunday. And now I'm awfully worried about one thing—you know I haven't got any brothers and sisters here any more. But my mother's still here, and I saw her yesterday, but not to speak to." With his keen dark eyes standing out in his thin brown face, he looked up and down the street, as if he were completely at a loss.

"If you would like to have me, Kalli," Klaus said, "I can go with you."

Kalli said nothing, and they walked together toward the Jungfernstieg.

They went up Berg Strasse to the place where the two big flower shops are. It was about seven o'clock, and as the evening was fine, the street was full of people. Suddenly Kalli Dau seized his friend's arm and pointed over to the corner where the Commetersche House now stands. "Look there," he cried, "look!"

Looking over, Klaus Baas saw her there. And as he looked at her, he realized that in passing before he had thought that she looked familiar. She had grown old, and had fallen away greatly, but she still wore a gay waist, and had the same restless way of moving her head. She stood there, holding out bunches of flowers to the passers-by, rather pertinaciously, it seemed, for every now and then some one gave her an impatient look, as he refused her. They stood there for a while, looking over at her. Finally the old woman, after looking up and down the street, and making up her mind that the thickest part of the crowd had passed, gave up business, put the bouquet she had had in her hand into the basket with the rest, picked the basket up, and tottered slowly off up the Berg Strasse, muttering to herself as she went. Klaus and Kalli followed in silence.

They walked along to the Fischmarkt, and from there down the Brandstwiete. Not far from the Dovenfleet she went down into one of the beer cellars which are numerous there. Kalli and Klaus, looking in at the uncurtained window, saw her pass through the long smoky room filled with guests, till she came to the bar, where she sat down in a corner.

Then they went in too, sat down near the door, and ordered a glass of beer. Next to them three Malay sailors, their dark faces surmounted by the usual red fez, were trying to tell the fat landlady, in broken English, what they wanted. Asking them a few questions in Malay, Klaus found out from the grinning fellows what they

wanted, — rice, curry, and whiskey. Farther down the room there were all kinds of dock-hands, scullers, inspectors, and trimmers. In front of the bar was a tableful of drunken trimmers in the midst of a noisy game of cards. All the people there were rather a bad lot. Captain Dau looked silently over the noisy crowd, and now and then took a good look at the crooked old woman up near the bar.

Klaus Baas got up, went through the people to the bar, and sat down on a chair beside her.

Looking up from her glass of kummel, she started a little when she saw the dignified looking gentleman. Then, raising her glass, she gave him an arch smile, and took a sip.

“I saw you sitting here,” Klaus said easily. “I knew you when I was a boy and lived in Rademachersgang. How is your son — Kalli, his name is, isn’t it?”

She nodded to him again just as archly, and whispered, as if she were telling some secret: “He’s a fine boy! Very fine, I tell you,” and she laughed to herself. “He sends me fifty marks every month — every blessed month. For that I get a place to sleep in upstairs here and something to eat. But I need a little pure religion, too,” she went on, winking slyly and pointing to her glass, “and that’s why I have the flower business.”

“Where are the other children?” asked Klaus Baas.

She shook her head. “I really don’t know, my dear sir.” She stared as if she were considering. “Let me see — one of them died when he was sixteen — the others — I really don’t know where they are. I guess they must be in America. I don’t know.”

“Wouldn’t you like to see your son Karl again, mother Dau?”

Quick as a flash she laid her thin old hand on his arm, bent her gray head nearer, looked at him anxiously, with wide open eyes, and whispered, as if afraid her son were there to hear, “No! I wouldn’t! I certainly wouldn’t! I don’t tell my name to a soul in this room. Every once in a while there’s some one here that’s going to China. It

would be a pretty business if some one should tell him that his old mother drinks and sells flowers on the street. Why, he's a captain now! Captain Dau! I'm often afraid, I tell you, when I'm standing there on the street with my flowers. I keep thinking, suppose he should come along and say, 'What are you doing standing there?' Please don't write to him that you saw me here, my dear sir!" She smiled, quite easy and confidential once more. "You see, I have a place to sleep upstairs here, but every evening when I come home I sit here with my glass two hours or so first."

Klaus Baas got up and went back to Captain Dau. "She's just the same, Kalli," he said. "There isn't anything you can do. It will be better for you both not to see each other again."

Kalli Dau got up and went out, Klaus Baas following him.

They walked along together silently toward Wex Strasse. Not until they were crossing the Ellerntor-Brücke did Kalli Dau look up and gaze around him. On the right the streets stretched in the evening sunlight toward the Alster; on the left stood St. Michael's tower, — mighty, strong, and beautiful, looking as if it were shedding every suspicion of sorrow. "I've always been awfully fond of Hamburg," said Kalli Dau, "but now it seems to me as if she were standing on every corner and coming out of every beer cellar."

Klaus Baas could only say, "It won't last much longer, Kalli; she's very much aged. I promise you I'll look after her now and then. If she gets sick she'll be looked after all right."

Kalli Dau walked on, thinking abstractedly. But gradually his heavy step became somewhat lighter, and he began to walk in his usual easy way, looking all around him as if he might at any moment strike up a little conversation with one of the passers-by. Finally he said, quite in his old confident, good-humored way, "As soon as I came from the office yesterday I hurried up to your mother's. I haven't any other friends here. When I was going up

the steps I met Hanna, just coming home from school with her books. I turned her and her books right around and walked to the Alster with her. We walked around once, and then we rode around once. We did that yesterday, and again to-day, and it was very nice."

Klaus Baas listened in amazement. "She didn't say a word about it to mother or me," he said.

"I told her not to," said Kalli Dau. "If I went around the world without asking leave when I was fifteen, I guess she can go around the Alster without asking leave when she's twenty-six. Do you happen to know whether she's got a sweetheart?"

"I don't think she has," answered Klaus.

"I was only thinking," said Kalli Dau, "that if she hadn't any other — then perhaps some day it might be possible —"

"Have you said anything to her about it?" asked Klaus Baas.

"Not a word! I've only talked to her a little bit — about anything that came up — Hamburg and China and so on. And then I told her all kinds of stories about what can happen to you. If she just isn't too refined and hasn't too much book-learning, Klaus!"

Klaus Baas shook his head. "I'd just advise you to go about it cautiously," he said.

Kalli Dau nodded and considered awhile. Finally he broke out, "Just do me the favor to see that your mother stays in the sewing room so that I can speak to her alone. I don't mean any disrespect to your mother, but her eyes are too sharp for me."

Laughing, Klaus Baas followed Kalli up the stairs.

As they went into the flat, Klaus Baas called Kalli's attention to a low humming behind the closed door of the dark room that opened on the court. "Well, she seems to be in a good humor," he said, "I guess her walk with you didn't cast her down, anyway."

Kalli Dau knocked, and they heard a cheery "Come in."

"You'd better come along," said Kalli, and they both went in.

Sitting with her hand in her lap in front of a pile of exercise books she had been correcting, Hanna seemed to be engaged in thought. The kind eyes she had inherited from her father, her dainty plumpness, and the exquisite neatness that had once made her take such an interest in the chimney-sweep, all exactly corresponded to her pretty name, Hanna Baas.

“Well, so this is where you live, is it?” said Kalli Dau, as he shook hands and sat down. “Well, upon my word, if there aren’t the two parrots!” Taking up one of the note-books from the pile, he turned it over and looked inside. “Well, let’s see what subject you assigned. Major von Tellheim — don’t know him, I’m sure. But I did know a Tellwein or Tellstein or something like that,” he said, leaning back comfortably. “He was quartermaster on the *Neptune* when I was along as second officer. We were only making seven knots, and it was mighty hot. And in times like that anything will amuse you. I’ve had all kinds of experiences, and I can tell about them, too; but I’m nothing to him. He told about once when he was mate on some kind of a rig going from Bombay to Hongkong. There was a Hindu in the crew — one of that old-fashioned kind from the interior. Well, at some port or other the Hindu did something out of the way, and to punish him the mate locked him up behind an iron door in a store-room. Happening to need more space than usual, they piled things against the place where the man was shut up. Seeing this, the quartermaster said to the captain, ‘We mustn’t forget that fellow.’ ‘Oh, it wouldn’t make much difference if we did,’ the captain said. ‘He’s one of that old-fashioned kind; he just squats there looking at his own belly, and doesn’t see or hear anything, and doesn’t get hungry or thirsty.’ Well, that satisfied the quartermaster. They sailed on, and ran into a storm, and put into port. There was some trouble, I forget what — and the quartermaster left that ship and went on board another. Six years afterward he went back to the first ship as quartermaster, or mate. He set about trying to get things into shape, for every-



thing was fairly going to ruin. They cleared away the stuff around the iron door and opened it; and there they found the Hindu, very well preserved, except that he was a little discolored where he had been leaning against the iron. However, the fresh air made that all right again. Every race has its peculiarity, Hanna. The other thing I wanted to say was, are you nailed fast here in Hamburg, or would it be possible for you to think of living in Queen's Road, Hongkong?"

Hanna blushed, and looked with shining eyes first at her big brother, then at Kalli Dau. "If the things you tell about it are true," she said at last, dubiously, "it doesn't sound exactly alluring."

"Don't you forget that word you used!" Karl Dau said. "Alluring? Well, I should think. I tell you, I had some experiences there. When I was a very young sailor on the *Anna Behn*, we were lying once off Otaheiti. With us there were two other German boats and a French man-of-war. Well, one fine day — the weather is always perfect there — we sat up half the night in the tavern with our French comrades, having a fine time together. I took my harmonica along, and played and played. I was in high spirits because we were having such a good time with the Frenchmen, and I probably got in too deep. I don't know how it happened, but when I started off alone back to the boat, I somehow lost my way. With my harmonica under my arm, I went on deeper and deeper into the forest. It seemed to me that I was in Holstein. Finally I got dead tired and lay down to sleep. When I woke up it was bright daylight, and I was lying on a clean matting in a neat little hut, and around me the whole family of Kanakas — that's what they call the natives — were sitting laughing and having a good time over my surprised looks. I made a sign that I was awfully thirsty. They brought me a fresh cocoanut at once, cut it open, and gave me the milk to drink. Since they were so good to me, I picked up my harmonica and played to them, and they danced to the music in the shade of the big trees. They were all nice looking people, and there were several pretty girls

among them. Everything was nice and cheerful and good to look at. Finally I said that I must go back to my ship. Then the oldest of them explained to me that they liked me and my music so much that they wanted to ask me to stay with them. They brought out three pretty girls, one of whom I was to choose for a wife. Now I tell you, that was really alluring. When I got back to the *Anna Behn* what was I? — a sailor, working barefoot, without family or friends. Well, still, it wouldn't have been right. Well, what now, Hanna?"

"Well," she said, smiling, "that story was a good deal better."

"There are lots of stories like that," said Captain Dau, with a gesture to indicate that he could produce heaps of them. "But they don't get us anywhere. I don't want to coax you, Hanna — but if you would like to go along — you know I have to leave in four days."

"That's a very short time," she said, giving him a long look.

Kalli Dau stood her look steadily. "You wouldn't have to bother with other people's children any more then, Hanna," he said, gravely and kindly; "for you'd have some of your own. And I wager they'd be mighty pretty children. I was an agile little chap by nature — the reason I walk somewhat heavily now is that my mother abused me."

Hanna slowly pushed aside the pile of books. Flushing delicately, she said in a low, trembling voice, "I should like very much to have a home and children of my own — but why is it that you want it?"

Kalli Dau really had to consider a minute. "I?" he said. "Why, I — I haven't got anything — I want a home and a wife and children, too." A sudden look of pain crossed his brown face. "I've just seen my mother for the last time, Hanna," he said. "I haven't anything else in the world."

She did not hear him. Womanlike, she was thinking of herself. With tears of doubt and discontent welling into her eyes, she said, "Well, but why is it that it's *me* you want?" pointing to herself.

“You?” said Kalli Dau. “Because every time I thought about my mother, I saw you. You’re the exact opposite of my mother. You are a dear pretty little thing — that’s why.”

She was blushing so prettily now that Klaus Baas, for the first time in his life, thought how pretty his little sister was. “Well, then,” she said slowly, “if you’re really sure that’s the way it is?”

Kalli Dau understood. Turning toward the door, he said, “You can go now, Klaus! Go tell your mother what’s up.”

That evening, while Klaus Baas was alone with his sister in her room, where she was packing the things she wanted to take with her, he said, “Kalli Dau is a real man, Hanna — and that’s a good deal in these days when there are so many that are only half men. And he is good — you know that. He is simple-minded, and has very little education, and if this or anything else you find out about him surprises you, why, you’ve got to remember that you’re there to help put him right. But go slow about the changing and helping; you don’t know the world, Hanna!”

“No,” she said, “I don’t. I had a big brother, but he never showed it to me.”

Klaus stopped and thought a moment. Then he said firmly, “It took a long time, Hanna, for me really to grow up myself. Since I rose from a lower rank than the one I am in now, there was a long time when I was slinking around the world shyly, just like a young fox in a strange country. To tell the truth, I wasn’t grown up and hadn’t any real confidence in myself till a year ago, and I got it in a woman’s arms. We learn to be sure of ourselves for the first time from the other sex. You will find that out, too.”

“Yes,” she said, with a deep sigh, “and I’m glad, too.”

“You are a dear, sensible girl,” Klaus said, glad to see her provided for. Then he put his arm around her.

“You never did that before,” she said in a low tone, a little bitterly. “You have always been cold with me.”

“Yes,” he said, “because I had so much to look after

for myself. So awfully much ! But if I had just known that you were in love, or that you wanted to be, I could have been open and intimate with you, as with a complete person. But you were always so reticent. Really, Hanna, you had the air of being shut up in a thimble ! ”

“ Well, now I’ll soon be a ‘complete person,’ ” she said, banteringly.

“ Yes, ” he said gravely, “ that’s just what I mean. ”

Four days later Hanna Baas left for China with Kalli Dau. At first she wanted him to go on ahead ; but in the end she was too kind-hearted to let him start off on the long voyage alone. Perhaps, too, she felt impelled to climb out of the thimble as soon as she could, and become a ‘complete person,’ as her big brother said.

Klaus was as proud as if he had brought about and managed the whole affair himself. As a matter of fact, however, his heart had been preoccupied with his own trouble.

## CHAPTER XXII

THE next day, when he was at Frau Eschen's, talking along with her in their usual fashion, she told him, before he had a chance to ask, that Sanna was coming home the next Wednesday. She had already been invited to a little party in Uhlenhorst by some friends whose name she mentioned. Klaus asked Frau Eschen whether she knew any of the other people that were asked. Among others she mentioned a man Klaus knew well. Klaus left at once.

He sought out this friend on the Exchange, and said to him, very casually, "While I was away I lost all my connections here and got pretty well out of things. If you have access to a nice house and think they need some one that will venture on a waltz or the lancers, as a last resort, why, just think of me."

"Why, Baas, I offered you things like that several times in the winter," his friend reproached him, "and you wouldn't hear of them. There's not much going on now. But I tell you, come on over to Uhlenhorst with me day after to-morrow. I've got an invitation from some nice people over there. And you're a man that does a person credit. I'll write over there to-day. You call on them and the thing's done." Klaus Baas laughed. "So far, so good," he thought.

He went out to Uhlenhorst, where he found a comfortable new house on Fähr Strasse, built with a broad hall, after the old Saxon style, and comfortable rooms. The owners, an elderly couple, were enjoying their property after many years of limited income. They had no children, and they wanted to open the house to their circle of acquaintances by giving a little dance. Klaus had manifestly been well recommended to them by their common

friend's letter, for they received him cordially and promised that he would meet several pretty young ladies.

It happened that the foreign mail, which had been delayed, came in on the very evening of the party, so that it was almost nine before Klaus could leave the office. He dressed in a hurry and rode out. The party was much larger than he had supposed it would be, for the whole house was full of people. Having spent several hours together with wine and dancing, they were all in high spirits. After speaking to his hostess, Klaus drifted into a circle of young merchants, two of whom he knew slightly. One had crossed his path in India, the other was his neighbor at the Exchange. For a while they all chatted pleasantly together.

He got away from them as soon as possible. As he was standing in the shadow of a big bower at the side, looking closely at the couples gliding by him, he caught sight of Sanna Eschen. Since the house was in general built and furnished in the style of well-to-do dwellings of about 1800, some of the ladies had dressed in costumes of that time. Sanna Eschen, too, had on a gown of some light stuff covered with pale flowers, which had been hanging all these years in the closet of her grandmother, old Madame Eschen. As she danced, she kicked out the wide, plaited skirt gracefully with her knee, her head bent low. Her bosom, rising and falling charmingly, seemed to be keeping time with the music; in short, she was putting her whole soul into the dance. As Klaus looked at her, his heart beat fast. "So that is what she has grown into," he thought; "into that beautiful, winning woman — quite as beautiful as her mother. But far too beautiful and noble for me, alas! I shall never win her." But even as he said to himself that he could not, he longed for her more hotly than ever. And standing there, thinking of all his tottering plans, he set his teeth — "I'll try it, at least," he said to himself, "no matter what comes of it."

Suddenly he saw Sanna, in the midst of her dance, direct a long, searching, then indignant, glance toward a couple dancing at the other end of the hall. Following her look,

Klaus saw a young unmarried man, whom he knew, dancing and apparently having a fine time with a small dark woman with a confident, coquettish manner. It was perfectly evident that Sanna was annoyed at this good-looking young man's behavior. Standing there behind the flowers, with a companion that had come up to him, Klaus watched the little scene unobserved for a while longer. The pair under suspicion were now standing in the corner. The small dark woman was flirting and leading the man on with her black eyes, and manipulating her fan with an air that was nothing less than art. The young man had eyes or thoughts for no one else ; and it was pretty plain that there was little hope for any third person — not just then, at least. And yet the third person existed — Fräulein Eschen. With pale face and big, quiet eyes, she danced on, never hearing at all what her partner was saying. She was trying to look away from the tormenting picture, and she couldn't do it. He was evidently an old admirer of hers, and she had just as evidently set great hopes on this first meeting with him after her return from England. She had thought his face would beam with joy at seeing her again ; and now this — ! Once the young man looked over at her, in an indifferent, hesitating way. And she saw the look ! How could a man turn his eyes from that tall, light-haired girl, all alive with noble vitality, to that dark, coquettish little creature ! “ Well, for the Lord's sake, take her — you're a good match,” thought Klaus. Finally Sanna Eschen stopped dancing. Three men gathered round her, two of whom were single, one married : not one of them was a really good, reliable man. Plainly they did not interest her, for her angry glances flew stealthily back to the corner, where the two were talking more and more gayly, and where the dark eyes were glowing more and more passionately all the time. Finally the two heads vanished behind her fan.

Sanna could endure it no longer. She stepped back cautiously, and catching up her grandmother's dress, slid along the wall and gained the open staircase. She sat down on a step pretty far up, where it was rather dark,

and hunted for her handkerchief in every possible place in this odd old gown ; failing to find it, she had to dry her tears with her gloves.

Then Klaus threaded his way through the guests with the firm resolve : “ As sure as I live, I will win that dear woman ! ” He went up the steps until he was on a level with her face, and said, in a hearty, encouraging tone, “ Jumbo, show the gentlemen your teeth ! ”

She gave him a surprised look, recognizing the words, without recognizing him. Then in astonishment, she held out her hand, and said, with real joy that some one had come to her in her trouble, “ Oh, can it be Herr Baas ! Oh, I’m so glad you are here ! ”

Still holding her hand, which she did not attempt to draw away, he said simply, “ May I sit beside you for a little while ? I can’t help seeing that you are sad, and I don’t like it. ”

She moved over quite willingly, and arranging her skirt more carefully about her knees and feet, pulled herself together and looked up at him with some curiosity and a little embarrassment.

Klaus sat down beside her. “ Really, you must show your teeth to the man over there in the corner, Fräulein Sanna, ” he said good-humoredly. “ A tall, beautiful girl like you certainly doesn’t let anything get the best of her. ”

She winced. “ It isn’t easy, though, ” she said honestly.

“ I’ve seen how it is, ” Klaus said. “ It’s inconceivable, of course, but what’s to be done ? You can’t hold him back from the way he wants to go, Fräulein Sanna. ”

She looked down at the happy throng of people dancing and chatting below, and her eyes suddenly filled with tears. Then she threw back her head, looked for her handkerchief, and finding it this time, wiped her eyes vigorously. Looking at Klaus Baas, she said, in a tone of honest resolve, “ I’m not going to bother any more about him. It doesn’t do me any good. And I don’t really like him any more. Now I want to talk to you a little bit. Will you stay with me a little longer ? ”

“ Suppose you tell me what you are doing, ” Klaus said.



She shrugged her pretty shoulders. "What I am doing?" she said spiritlessly, with a sort of forced cheerfulness. "Two years ago I qualified as a teacher. I've just been in England for a year. And now I'm back to the old life again. I help a little around our little home—but that's nothing. I do a few errands, go to see a friend, idle on the Alster on fine evenings; I sit and make myself a new waist, or a table-cover; and I plan how to spend my little monthly allowance to the best advantage. That's all. I get thirty marks a month. You can't do much with that. In winter I'll probably have to play teacher again, or at any rate I'll have to give a few lessons to fill out my exchequer a little. It's ghastly."

"I was just thinking a little while ago," said Klaus, "how beautifully you were dancing."

"Were you looking at me?" she asked.

"All the time," he answered, quite as a matter of fact; "where else should I look? While you were dancing there, so pretty and so tall, I just felt like telling you what a delicate little thing you were when we were there at Aunt Laura's and I warmed the milk bottle."

"O dear me," she said, with a quick little laugh, shaking her head dubiously, as if the picture he had conjured up were of some other queer little girl. With a quick look at him, she said mischievously, "I can just see you standing there now," and she made a gesture with her right hand to illustrate washing the brushes.

Klaus laughed and nodded, feeling inexpressibly drawn to her. "And then," he said, "we saw each other the evening Karl and I were leaving for India. You looked awfully nice in your little white nightie. I carried you on my arm like this—"

"Oh, my goodness!" she said, again speaking as if they were talking about a little girl that had somehow been stolen by the gypsies. "What a little goose! Well, in those days we had a game we used to play—Karl brought it home from the office; we would bow low all around, sliding back our right foot a little, and say with great dignity, 'Klaas Hinrich Baas!'"

Klaus laughed and nodded. "Oh, you with your beautiful eyes," he thought to himself more and more passionately; "you with your full red mouth and white teeth—I'm going to win you!"

"Then we saw each other again," he said, "when I came back from India. I met you on the steps—don't you remember? And you begged me not to tell that little night-gown story. You said he would go crazy if he found it out."

"Oh, my goodness!" she said, as if the little gypsy child, half frozen, and in rags, had just been found behind a hedge. "What a fourteen-year-old goose I was!"

"Was that your first love affair?" he asked.

She reflected. "No," she said, "the first was two years before that. It was when father was sick and we were living up there in Hamm. We used to go sledding down the hill with the other children. And once in a while we had fights and the boys washed our faces with snow. And I remember I gradually came to want a certain boy to get angry with me and wash my face pretty often. I just hated having any one else do it, and shrieked as if I were being killed; but I kept almost quiet when he did." She shrugged her shoulders. "I must have been very fond of him," she said reflectively. "Don't you think so?" and she looked questioningly at Klaus Baas.

He nodded gravely. "And then came your schoolboy friend," he said.

"Yes," she said, "but I guess that was mostly just talk and foolishness. My girl friends all had an admirer, and I didn't want to be behind them. But he had a mole on his nose," she added honestly.

Klaus Baas laughed. "And then?" he said, "go on."

She looked up at him a little suspiciously as he sat there beside her, to see whether he was really in earnest.

"My mother mentioned you in almost every letter she wrote," she said. "She told me how awfully hard you were working, and how sober you were, and what trouble you had in your marriage—and things like that. And I never supposed you would care to listen to this silly

stuff, or that you could be so jolly and above all, so awfully human.”

He nodded his head at her cheerfully. “A person’s got to be jolly,” he said. “You are, too. Otherwise a person is absolutely colorless. Go on, now. Tell the whole honest truth.”

She looked at him, still somewhat hesitatingly, but when he said, “Go on” in his imperative way, she began. “Well, I was eighteen then, and this time it was really serious. It was a gentleman—well, his name doesn’t matter. I’ll call him Mr. Staircase. I met him a good deal at social gatherings and we all liked him immensely, and we were all after him. And I guess several of us had our hopes. But I thought that he singled me out especially and that he would marry me. It went on that way for two years, till I was twenty. I kept thinking that I was really the one and that it would happen any time. Then all of a sudden he married my friend. I was invited to the wedding; but I went over a little while before and said that I was going away and couldn’t come. She knew very well how things stood, and she cried about me. And I laughed. But when I got outside, I cried, too. They have a little boy now. I saw him on the street not long ago—he can just walk. He’s a dear little chap! Well—that was Mr. Staircase.—I suppose about six girls had hopes of him.”

She was looking hard at the dancers, and her mouth was shut tight.

“And next?” said Klaus, kindly and firmly.

“Well, then,” she went on slowly, “last winter a distant acquaintance came back from Mexico. He was a merchant, too. I’ll call him Mr. Bracket. He wasn’t a bad sort. We used to have a really good time sitting together drinking wine and talking French. He spoke it better than I did. But still he was—I hardly know how to say it—so narrow—and dependent, kind of like his name. He depended so on other people’s observations and opinions. People always said, ‘He’s a terribly good-hearted sort.’ Good-hearted sort! What would I do

with a man like that! He was a little stupid, too, I thought. For instance, he thought a girl of twenty-two had had absolutely no experience, and had always had her head in the clouds waiting for the one man to come. So stupid! And then he hadn't the least idea what altruism means."

"Well, I don't know that either," said Klaus Baas, dryly.

"You don't?" she said, in amazement. "How can that be? You really don't know?" And she looked at him searchingly. "Well, anyway, you are very different from him. And then you've had to work hard from childhood up. You've had to keep at washing the brushes. I think that if you had had time you would have an interest in all kinds of things."

He laughed and nodded. "Go on!" he said.

"Well—on then. He proposed to me, but I couldn't abide him. And I couldn't bear to see him any more. So I sent him off—and then—" she looked down at the dancers.

"And then," said Klaus Baas, "then came the man standing there in the corner with the little dark woman. I think it would be a good thing to call him Mr. Step and to walk over him and forget him. And now, if you like, we'll join the lancers. Then we two old acquaintances can get a good look at each other. But even if you don't feel happy, you must look cheerful. I insist on it, first, on my account, because I've done so much for you, from the time when I looked after that bottle of yours till now; and secondly, for your own sake, because I don't want Mr. Step to get to imagining anything!"

She was standing there straightening her dress and breathing deeply. Looking at him with her big eyes, she said, "How much can happen on a staircase! You really have cheered me up."

"Of course!" he said. "It just had to be. That's what comes of old association and secret influence. The safety-pin at your belt is all undone. May I? There's where I come in again."

She laughed. "My goodness!" she said, "how much I have told you! I wonder how I could be so confidential!"

"Oh, pshaw!" he said curtly. "Come — they are taking their places."

After the dance they stepped back a little and stood comfortably beside a big wardrobe. In a low voice she questioned him curiously about the hard times the firm had gone through the year before. As he told her various things, she followed him closely, her keen eyes riveted on his eyes and mouth. When he had finished, she remained beside him, with her arm in his in a friendly fashion. Finally, with a certain confidence, he said, "Well, shall I go away and leave you?"

"If you want to get rid of me," she said, as simply as a child speaks to its elders.

He shook his head in denial. "You know very well, Fräulein Sanna," he said, "that I'd rather stay with you than anywhere else."

She turned around and went through the crowd with him, greeting various acquaintances, and quite overlooking Mr. Step, who was still talking to the little dark lady. Over in one corner she gave him a second and very particular introduction to a young woman, an old friend of hers. "Of course, you didn't understand the name when I introduced you, Lene," she said. "This is Herr Baas, who was at Aunt Laura's with Trude and me when she was painting the prophets; and then he was in India with Karl; and last year he acted for Arthur in that dreadful panic."

Her friend laughed. "You told me all that before, you goose," she said. "You told me in your letters, and when you saw me, too. So this is he! And what now?"

"What now?" Sanna repeated, hesitatingly, looking at the serious-looking, artful friend, and then at Klaus Baas's confident eyes. She became confused. "Well, heavens, what now? Well, why, now, he is here, of course — and," blushing more and more — "and he's remarkably nice — and I won't speak to you for seven years, you mean thing!"

After speaking to some other friends, they separated for a while. Then they had another dance together.

"You certainly can dance!" she said approvingly.

"Yes, it's a gift that runs in our family," he said. "And then when I was in Blankenese I had a sort of graduate course with the navigation students. I was twenty-two then. That's ten years ago."

She looked at him intently. "I'll wager you were a great rogue then," she said.

"Well, you're one too, Sanna," he said. "Think how sad you were, sitting there on the stairs. And now you're quite gay and laughing. Laugh again, please — it sounds so good."

Klaus had hoped to make the trip back with her and the others. But it turned out that she was staying there as a guest overnight.

In the midst of his work next day he kept thinking how he could effectively hasten what he had so well begun.

He decided finally to go to Frau Eschen's immediately after the closing hour at the office and ask politely how Fräulein Sanna was after the night before.

He approached the house just as it was getting dark. As he was crossing the street, he saw her sweep out of the door and down the few steps of their house. She had on an immaculate white waist with a high linen collar and a man's blue tie, a hat and a loose jacket, and she looked indescribably trim. She held her head a little forward, and kept her mouth open just a little. She walked with a sort of swinging, free knee movement — a fashion she had brought over from England.

Though she was plainly in a hurry, she stopped so suddenly when she saw him that her skirt swung around her. She gave him her hand with quick cordiality, and through the twilight peered into his face in her clear, bright way. Evidently she found there everything that had attracted her the night before. She looked charmed when he told her that he had meant to come to see her, and took him up the two steps to the door. Then she suddenly stopped.

"Oh, it's too stupid!" she said. "There are two old ladies up there, come to see mama."

"But I wanted to talk to you," Klaus said persistently. "Can't we take a little walk together?"

She looked thoughtful. "That would hardly do," she said, "right here in the heart of the city."

He drew her hand, which he had not let go, a little toward him, coaxingly. "Then tell me some time this week when we can take a little walk — alone — out of doors, for quite a while."

"Well, where could we?" she said, in a slow, hesitating voice, looking straight at him.

"Wherever you want!"

She drew her brows quite together in her effort to conjure up something.

Finally she said, "I could make a call in Hochkamp toward evening to-morrow."

"Well, then," he said quickly, "we'll meet at seven at the station there and go to one of the parks. Say you will, Sanna," and he drew her hand to him in passionate entreaty.

His hand and his look showed her that he was being irresistibly drawn toward her. She drew back, her eyes big and proud, her face pale.

And he, seeing that she loved him, said, with the mastery of love, "You will come, Sanna!"

She stood there straight as an arrow, her face pale, her eyes fixed solemnly upon him. Suddenly she held out her hand and shook his vehemently as if to say, "That settles it." Then she turned around and went slowly up the steps again.

Klaus went home fairly drunken with happiness. Sitting down opposite his mother, he boasted along at a great rate, giving her all kinds of false leads as to the source of his exuberance. Exhilaration of this sort in him was always to Antje Baas like a red rag to a bull. She immediately reminded him of the tongs, of St. Pauli, of his dismal trip back home, and of the six years of his married life. She impressed on him all the errors that he or any

other Baas had ever committed, as a result of folly or arrogance. But her scorn only increased his exuberance.

The next night — a lovely soft May evening — Sanna was at the place agreed upon at the appointed time. She greeted him very gravely, but with no sign of anger or repulsion. They walked along toward the Elbe, talking of all kinds of trifles.

When they reached the park, it had grown darker, and they could proceed more comfortably. They turned into a narrower pathway leading up along the Elbe. All at once his hand happened to touch hers; in a minute he had seized and held it, and they were walking on hand in hand. Over the Elbe in front of them hung great dark clouds, casting dark shadows far out over the water. On the other side, the landscape lay in a soft grayish mist; a light damp west wind blew over the water toward them. They walked along for a while silently, gazing at the broad landscape. Finally he began very directly to tell her about his father and mother, his childhood, and his youth; then he went on to tell about his marriage, and for what reasons they had separated; at last he spoke of Doris Rotermund. She walked along, holding his hand, with her head down.

“It isn’t possible,” he said, “that I could make another mistake like the first. For I know myself now, and I know a woman; and I know that you are a woman after my own heart. But I don’t exactly know how you feel about it, Sanna.”

“It’s awfully good of you to tell me all that so naturally,” she said approvingly, in a low voice. “That’s just what mother always wrote me — that you were a simple, absolutely natural person.”

“So your mother has helped my cause!” he said.

“Of course she has,” Sanna said. “She’s to blame for it,” she went on, as if she were saying, “Mother sold me for a hundred marks.”

He laughed. “That isn’t true, Sanna Eschen,” he cried, shaking her hand. She took it all in a pleased, quiet way, looking straight ahead of her with a wise smile.



"Well, now to go back to our own business," he said. "Shall I ask you a question?"

"Go on."

Holding her hand in a gentle, yet firm clasp, he said, as they walked on, "Night before last, on the stairs, you told me your love experiences, Sanna, but perhaps you left out something. Wait—don't think that I would love and respect you less if you were to tell me now that you had already loved some one else passionately. You belong to yourself, just as everybody else does. I'm asking you this only so that I can really know you, and so that you won't perhaps have to cherish some secret with anxiety or possible twinges of conscience. And if you don't want to tell, it isn't in the least necessary."

"When I was nineteen," she began, slowly and hesitatingly, "I went to Lene's wedding—you know, you met her the other evening. Among the guests there was a relative of my friend's, a married man who had come back from Chili without his wife. He danced with me a great deal, and he was so gay and sure and kind, and I was so full of animal spirits that evening—well, I liked him too much. And once, when we were walking along an out-of-the-way passage together to get some lady's cloak, he suddenly seized me and kissed me—for a good while. I was terribly confused, and really didn't know what was the matter with me—but it was very beautiful. That's the only experience I've ever had. I told you all the rest on the stairs."

He patted her hand. "Tell me," he said, "how is it that you could change over in one evening from that man you did love to me?"

She looked meditative for a moment, then answered thoughtfully, "I thought about that afterward myself, and wondered at it. But I'm not made so that I can love only one man; I can fall in love with any one of the many that have certain qualities. He must be firm and assured, rather taciturn, decided and curt, deferential, and yet rather masterful. And then, too, of course, he must be reasonably tall and tolerably good looking, preferably with

light hair. When I get acquainted with a man like that — and there are plenty of them, of course — and talk to him and feel that that's the kind he is, I love him. I suppose I've met at least thirty men whom I could have married almost on the spot. But most of them were married already, or engaged; and the others either didn't like me or didn't happen to see me again. That's the way I am, and I can't help it. But I really believe that all the right sort of girls are that way — that is, all that are really healthy and broad."

"Broad?" he asked. "What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, well," she said, and then stopped.

Then she went on, in some embarrassment, "Well — just kind of human — we are all made of flesh and blood, aren't we? — I had hardly seen a man the whole year I was in England. Then when I came home and went to that party where he was, I realized that I had been thinking of him a whole year. And I imagined that he would be just as glad as I was, and that he would dance with me a great deal, and maybe kiss me. Instead of that, he expressly avoided me, and went to that woman right before my eyes, too. And then you came, and you were so kind and cheery. And I knew a good many nice things about you — and about everything you had done for us. And then you're such a good dancer." She tried to look at him roguishly, but only love beamed from her big, serious eyes. She dropped them quickly, passed her free hand over her brow and temples, and said, in a low voice, "When a man is nice to me, my love grows stronger every hour. And then I can't see or think of anything but just him."

He pressed the hand now lying more lovingly in his. "You've been wanting a husband and children a long time, haven't you, Sanna?" he said.

"I didn't know much about it up to the time I was eighteen," she said. "It was just a kind of general feeling — like wanting to see some one once in a while — and dance with him — and speak to him on the street — and hear him say something bright — and at the very most let him kiss me sometimes. But ever since that man kissed

me at the wedding, — though I would probably have felt it sometime anyway, — ever since then I've longed for a husband and children. Lying in bed at nights I've imagined all the things I'd like to have: a fan, a new walking suit, — dark blue, tailor-made, with black buttons, — and a wardrobe with a long mirror you can really see yourself in before you go out. But the last thing I wished for just before I went to sleep was always a nice good husband."

"What did you think about in your little bed last night," Klaus said, "after I had talked so wildly there in the dark?"

She gave him a quick look. Then, looking straight ahead, she said, with a low laugh, "I just thought, 'This is what you get for making fun of him all these years. Now you are going to be his wife.'"

Seeing, in the pale light, that her coat collar was turned up a little, Klaus arranged it, and then left his arm around her shoulder. "The examination isn't finished yet," he said.

She moved a little rebelliously in his arm, and looked saucily at the lights far out on the water. "Well, what next?" she said.

"Well," he said, "you've still got to answer the big old question — what's your religion?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't think much about it," she said. "Not a single soul really knows what the truth of the matter is. I once made a resolve to say a prayer every night, and I still do it. It seems to make me have peaceful thoughts. But that's about all I can say."

"And I can't say any more!" said Klaus. "It's too bad, I suppose, but it's so."

They walked along for a while in silence, looking out over the wide evening landscape. Both were of those who have lost a real belief in the old revelation of the eternal, and who, in doubt and discouragement, are always seeking a new one, because they find themselves still between birth and death, between good and evil.

"There's one thing more," Klaus said. "I have a

mother and several brothers and sisters. They are simple people, brought up in very different surroundings from yours, Sanna Eschen. I will never expect or even want you to have much to do with them. You are marrying me, not my family. But my wife must be able to treat my mother kindly, when she comes to our house — which will happen seldom enough. She deserves that for what she's done for me and for all of us."

Sanna gave him a quick look. "You didn't need to say that," she said curtly. "Whatever pride I may have is for fools and simpletons. I'm simple and natural with simple, natural people."

Passing out of the park and going farther down toward the shore, they reached some narrow wooden stairs leading down to the water. Drawing her closer to him as they walked, Klaus said, "Shan't we go down here and walk along the shore a little way?"

Her face and manner became as grave and stiff as they had been the night before, when she saw that he wanted to kiss her. She stood still and hesitated. Then, happening to catch sight of something dark cowering in the shrubbery at the side, she bent down and saw a little girl of about six kneeling there with a little cat beside her. Glad of such a good way of diverting Klaus, she knelt down quickly. "What are you two doing here?" she asked.

"Mieze ran down to the Elbe," said the little girl hurriedly, a little frightened, "and I went to get her. We just climbed up this far, and now we're tired."

She patted the two tired playmates, and said they were both just as pretty and velvety as they could be. Then she had to get up. As she rose she pulled at her collar.

"What's the matter? Shall I help?" said Klaus. And quite regardless of her stiff manner, he simply put his hand inside her collar and felt one light hair which had strangely got caught inside her dress in front. He began to pull it out very carefully, and pulled and pulled. It was very long, and stretched out a good distance.

She got redder and redder. "Stop that!" she cried angrily. "You take a lot of liberties!"

"I'm very sorry," he said laughingly.

"Sorry!" she said, looking very solemn.

"Come, now, let's go down there."

"*I will not*," she snapped.

But he calmly turned her around by the shoulder, and led her down the narrow dark steps.

When it became very dark, in among the high bushes, she said, "Do you know whether it's low tide? If it isn't, we can't go down there."

"Of course I know," he said.

"Why of course?" she said, turning on him.

By her tone and by the way she held her head, he saw that she was in a very contrary mood. With a short laugh, he led her on down, keeping his hand on her shoulder. "Because," he said, in calm good humor, "because I made up my mind before I left the house to kiss you down there. It doesn't do up above there on account of the people."

She said nothing, but kept perfectly quiet inside his arm.

When they had got out into the light again, down below, where at ebb tide there is a rather broad strip of sandy beach covered with willows and thin reeds, he kissed her on the hands and mouth. She stood rather stiffly in his arms, looking at him pale and solemn-eyed, almost hostilely. He let go her arms, took her head in his hands, and said gravely, "Now you use your arms for what they were given you for — Sanna!"

A steamer whistling as it passed, and the heavier rolling of the water prevented her from hearing him. The wind was blowing harder, too. "Well, have I passed the whole examination?" she said.

"If you will do what I want you to — and will say 'thou' to me."

She looked at him again, at his hair, and eyes, and mouth, — gravely, as if she wanted to judge everything about him very critically first. Then, with a winning sigh, she said, "Oh, thou — with that obstinate mouth —" and she put her arms around him and kissed him.

A few months later, on the evening before the wedding, Klaus was in Sanna's room with Frau Eschen, packing up her little library. It was to be sent over that evening to the apartment he had rented in Blankenese. Finally Frau Eschen, tired with her day's work, sat down to rest a few minutes. Looking up, Klaus saw that she had tears in her eyes.

He asked if it was hard for her to give up Sanna.

She shook her head. "How can you think that?" she said. "I wrote to her about you often while she was in England, just because I wanted her to think well of you before she came home and saw you. I wanted to win you for the firm, and for Sanna, and for me. The three of us need a strong man's help. I'm crying because she is entering married life, and will bear children and bring them up; I have left all that behind me."

Klaus Baas went on packing, thinking of his first marriage, when the bride's mother had wept too,—but because she was sorry for her child, and was losing her. "You've been a real woman, mother," he said, "and you are still. And Sanna's exactly like you, and I'm inexpressibly glad of it. You will often come out to see us, and be happy with Sanna and the children."

Sanna came in just then, and her mother went out.

"What was mother crying for?" she asked, in concern.

"It grieves her to think that you are going to be a man's wife and have children," he said, "because, you see, that's all over for her."

She came inside his arm in her decided way. "Well," she said, "I surprise you sometimes—but see, I have a mother that's just the same. I can understand what she means absolutely and—just look out, it will be the same with me." Then, raising herself a little, she put both arms around him. And looking happily into his face, she said, in her healthy, straightforward Hamburg way, "I'm glad we're as far along as this!"

## CHAPTER XXIII

IT was a time of flourishing business in Hamburg. The power of the lately united peoples was expanding like a good tree transplanted from a shady place out into the sunlight. The younger generation of merchants was pouring out from Hamburg into England, China, South America, and many other places, offering their goods and continually sending new contracts back home. Encouraged by the increased demand, the small manufacturer set up bench after bench, anvil after anvil, loom after loom. And now the overflow from the lowlands—and unfortunately more than the overflow—instead of emigrating beyond the seas, came to people the enlarged factories. Hundreds and thousands from Holstein, Hannover, and Mecklenburg were now moving to Hamburg, instead of going across the seas, as they had been doing for many years. Soon the gardens, meadows, and cornfields all around the big old town were laid out with long streets. Sailors coming home after a year's cruise on the big boats sailing to Sydney and the western coast of America almost lost their way in the confusion of new quays. Men from abroad coming back to visit their firms after ten years or so, and to enjoy the old life at home and see the familiar Alster, were fairly astounded at the big buildings around the water front, and at the throngs of men crowding along the Jungfernstieg when work was over at night.

With his strong, sensuous nature satisfied, Klaus Baas now had his energy at command. His old peasant stock, in which zeal for work and responsibility have always been the chief virtues, had also bequeathed to him a certain craftiness, and the careful energetic way of stepping out that characterizes a good horse in the spring, after months

of confinement in the stable. All these things made him bring new aims and schemes into the somewhat loosely managed business in which he was now a partner.

Klaus had among his acquaintances a capable young fellow belonging to an old mercantile house in Lübeck. Since his father's office, which had been connected for two hundred years with Riga and St. Petersburg, was becoming too limited in its operations for the young man, who wanted to win back the old-time Hanseatic glory along the Yellow Sea, he made up his mind to go to Shanghai and make himself independent there. He approached Klaus for a recommendation to a large firm operating there. Klaus convinced his brother-in-law that they might take up the project themselves. He got together more capital and skilfully set the thing going. It was the time when the interior of China was beginning to want all kinds of products of civilization. The young man from Lübeck seized the opportune moment, and being a capable and ambitious fellow, worked with such good results that the sample room of H. C. Eschen was soon full of all kinds of specimens of loom and metal industries, paints, and chemicals. It might, indeed, have been a store along the Yangtse. Soon the Shanghai business was quite as important as the other.

Klaus was often vexed at his brother-in-law's desultory way of working, and still more at his way of frequently leaving early, or, as happened even oftener, of staying away altogether. After Arthur Eschen realized that the fresh, alert workman at the desk next to his was really working for his affairs, his somewhat facile nature gave itself up more and more to trifling. He had a quick way, characteristic of men in large cities, of discussing everything he saw and heard—business affairs, politics, people, arts, and sports—somewhat drolly and flippantly. The result was that he did not think about or observe deeply any one thing, no matter how important it was. He was much interested in anything that had to do with art, pictures and bronzes in particular, and especially those that Paris produced. Every year he and his wife spent several weeks there in



a very gossipy, superficial study of art. As a matter of fact, they simply indulged themselves in the luxury and activity of a finished civilization, in a place where Frau Eschen could display more elegant toilettes than the upright wife of a Hamburg merchant usually affects. Klaus Baas, deeply rooted in his old peasant ideas of civilization, like all simple, strong-willed people of large purpose, saw life in three or four divisions—as, business, family, life abroad, and death. He was narrow enough to term all this love of art and travel childishness, a great nuisance, or, when work was pressing, tomfoolery. He called his brother-in-law's attention to the fact that the great amount of credit made necessary by the expansion of their business was out of all proportion to the family fortune. There was a possibility, therefore, that the difficulties they had just passed through might recur. In view of this, Klaus urged him to increase his own funds by managing his household more economically, as Klaus himself was doing, and intended to do. Arthur Eschen said, however, that the credit of the firm was satisfactorily assured now, and that the old distinction of the family demanded keeping up appearances. And although he did not entirely reject Klaus's advice, he, and especially his wife, took care that there should be little change in their usual restless, unsubstantial way of living.

Klaus himself lived with Sanna in a little house in the upper part of Blankenese. From their low windows they could look out over a tiny flower garden, past the branches of an old broken linden, and see a little bit of the Elbe. They saw very few people. Klaus, like most people whose childhood and education have been somewhat narrow, was rather stiff and correct in his manner. Sometimes, again, among people he knew well, he came out clumsily with rather absolute opinions: Sanna called this his "Heisterberg talk." Now and then they went to see the old couple in whose house they had met again. They made friends, too, with a young couple of an old, refined family. These new friends evidently found great pleasure in Klaus's stiff punctiliousness and his vigorous way of bursting through

it sometimes, and in the refreshing quality and refinement of his wife. Beyond this circle, Sanna had her mother, and Klaus his business acquaintances.

Sanna was very happy in the new married life. She knew how to manage a house well, and went through the little rooms in confident good humor, planning this or that. She had joked a little at first about how funny it was that such a boastful man, with such a high-sounding name, should live in such a tiny house, and make his wife buy such simple, scanty furniture. She got rather provoked sometimes when she could not make any impression on him by telling him that so and so lived much better than they did. And it vexed her that he made short shrift of so many things in the world, and dismissed them as foolishness; and because he sometimes spoke harshly and disapprovingly of her brother, and didn't seem to understand Uncle Eberhard at all. But when he explained to her again that the condition of the business was growing more and more critical, and that they must both save in order to increase the available capital, and that they were doing it with a view to their old age and their children, the zeal and pride characteristic of her good old Hamburg stock came to the fore, and Sanna saved every cent she could. She did her own sewing, watched for bargains at the big stores, and held solemn discussions with her maid. In short, she conducted herself like a marvellously sensible woman pulling at the same rope as her husband.

Besides, there was little call for her to concern herself outside her home, for she was very soon pregnant. She accepted her condition good-humoredly, "considering what it was for," as she said.

One day, not long before the baby came, Klaus came home to find her reading a book, nestling in the corner of the sofa much as Doris Rotermund once had done. She held out her hand over the book without looking up, or saying anything. When, as usual, he pulled her hand to make her shoulders move, she said gravely, "Don't disturb me, Klaus; I'm reading Shakespeare's historical plays."

Amazed, Klaus sat down beside her, threw away the

book, and declaring that he was a good deal more important than Shakespeare was, put his arms around her. "How did you happen on Shakespeare all at once?" he asked.

She raised herself a little, and putting her arm around his shoulder, said, "Well, you see, I'm sometimes a little bit afraid — I'm just trying to cheer myself up."

"With those tragedies?"

"Why, yes," she said. "You see, there's so much that's big and terrible in them that you get big and powerful yourself as you read them; and then you aren't afraid any more."

Again Klaus was secretly amazed. "Would a Holstein woman ever have thought of reading Shakespeare's plays in order to get courage for her confinement?" he thought. Praising her, he said, "Well, just you get as well acquainted with the plays as you can — for when you have seven children, you won't have time."

"I want six," she said, "no more."

The child, longed for, and conceived and awaited in love, was brought into the world with little pain and danger. She brought it up with the greatest pleasure. Babies were "too sweet for anything," she said, "heavenly," "sweet as sugar," "ever so cute." She called it all the names she had ever picked up in her school and seminary days. And because she liked babies so much, they came rapidly; first Klaus Baas, then Shakespeare, then — "Oh, well, Klaus, babies are so nice," and then another one. The plays were read three times within four years; and Sanna went into society very little.

Finally they did begin to go out, to her mother's, or to Arthur Eschen's in Harvestehude, or to see a cousin. Sanna sometimes took Klaus to task because he had been too silent; or because he hadn't talked to this or that person; or because he had looked so cold and sceptical; or because when he did talk, he had been too condescending. And Klaus, looking at her calmly, in a little surprise, assented to all that she said, a little scornfully, she thought, as if to say, "Oh, you and your people!" He treated it

all as the merest trifle. That made her very cross, for she believed in good form, she said, and knew how people ought to behave. What went ahead of an old Hamburg merchant family, anyway? She knew what good form was; and she knew the world.

Once they got into a real quarrel on this point. They were coming home from an evening company at the home of a cousin who lived out toward Winterhude, which was being built up a good deal at that time. It seemed that Klaus had again not conducted himself well. Klaus answered her calmly, asking, with a gesture as if he were presenting the question on a tray, "Would you like me to be like your cousin — or like your brother? Would you be happier then? Don't you think I have done well enough, although I haven't concerned myself about the theatre and bronzes and social elegance? Did I deceive you by playing the part of a man of the world and a society leader before we were married? Or did I tell you straight out that I was a business man and would give you children and a safe, comfortable home? So far as I am concerned, I like *you* just as you are. A real true woman ought to be sensitive, pure, and kindly, and you are all of these. But sometimes you have an interfering, aggressive way of trying to drive my wagon for me. Isn't it running all right? Is it ridiculous? Have you ever seen any one laughing at it? I've made a firm determination just to stay myself. And you be yourself, too, Sanna Eschen. And now that's all I'm going to say. Go to bed and be ashamed of yourself."

She stood leaning stiffly against the side of the bedroom door, listening to him gravely, without moving or saying a word. When he had finished, she still stood there awhile, looking at him in the same way. When he looked at her, she turned and went into the bedroom.

He heard her moving silently around, getting ready for bed. At last, when everything was quiet, he went in and went to bed too.

After a while she got tired — a woman likes to give in, if she has the best of it, but she doesn't like to be beaten.

She raised her head cautiously and propped it on her hand. After lying that way for a while, she said cautiously, "Klaus Baas?" and waited breathless.

When nothing happened, she ventured again. Klaus could detect the slight uncertainty as she said, "I've married a real peasant." She waited again.

When even then nothing happened, she said, "How can a man be so rude to his wife?" Nothing but absolute silence.

Finally she said, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself now?"

That made him laugh. Although she spat like a hyena, — she had studied it at the Zoölogical Gardens, and her children imitated it already, — he drew her to him, and she lay there, reconciled and good-humored. His assurance and his big talk were the very things she loved in him, the more because her attacks on them were so vain; and he loved most in her her obstinate aggressive way, and her positiveness.

Klaus seldom went to see his mother. She had told him at once that after he had been in the city all day, he ought to spend his evenings and his Sundays with his wife and children. Then he besought her to come out to see them at least every two weeks. She had to give in — for as she grew older she was becoming absolutely docile with him. So she came, in her plain dark gray dress, with a light black silk scarf over her head, like those worn by elderly women in her native place. Whenever it was possible, she came in the evening, when Klaus had come home from the city and the children were being put to bed. One evening, when he was waiting for his train at the Dammtor station, he saw her standing off at the side, looking, with calm, critical eyes, at the people standing around waiting for the train. He purposely walked past her several times, pretending not to see her; she drew a little farther back and stood there inconspicuously as before. Then he went up to her.

"You were hiding from me," he said threateningly.

"I didn't think you would want to recognize me," she said, teasing him.

He gripped her arm more tightly, "Are you trying to tell a fib, too?" he said.

"Go away, boy," she said in a low voice. "Why should people see us together?"

He smiled. "You just come along with me, or I'll kiss you here on the spot," he said.

Then she went with him and rode with him to Blankenese. When they got there, she sat in the nursery and looked on gravely while the children were being undressed. She did not make up to them any more than they offered to. And with excessive politeness she asked Sanna, "Do you mind if the child does this or that?" every time, before she did what they wanted her to. She never indicated by a single word that such or such a thing about the house struck her as either right or wrong; in fact, she seemed to see nothing but the children. The result was that Sanna liked to have the quiet, reserved visitor.

"You must have been an awfully bad boy to get so many whippings," she said to Klaus Baas, "because your mother is so just. But still I can believe it, for you're still incredibly obstinate."

He laughed. "Her justice was a little one-sided then," he said; "and I guess you got a good many whippings, too, in the course of a day. You're still incredibly obstinate."

Klaus never saw any of his old acquaintances, nor did he look them up. Once in a while, at the Exchange, or on the street, he had a brief handshake from some one he had met during his apprenticeship, or in India, or when he was living in the country. And once in a while in Blankenese he got a greeting from a brown-faced sailor, or a smile from a captain's wife. Two or three times a year he ran into Heini Peters. The household goods business had not lasted very long, and he had taken another position as clerk. That hadn't gone very well either, because Heini was too talkative and undecided. Now he was employed in one of the city administration bureaus. He was still wearing the long black coat, which had grown rather

shiny, but for the high hat — the regular merchant's helmet — he had substituted a slouch hat, the general character of which corresponds well with a gentle decline in prospects, and almost indicates it. Whenever Heini met him he talked as enthusiastically and loyally as ever about his native town and about old acquaintances and about his plan for honoring the graves of certain others who had been related to his great poet. Sometimes, when he was joking about himself and his friend, he liked to fall into his beloved Low German — "Ick verdeen Dags 'n Daler, Klaas! Denk mal: een ganzen Daler! Du büst 'n andern Kerl, Klaas Hinrich! 'n bannigen Kerl! Du büst 'n Tiger!"<sup>1</sup> They walked along a little way together and then separated. Klaus had invited him to Sunday dinner once, and had enjoyed thinking of the rather aristocratic look of surprise that would come over Sanna's face when she saw him, for Sanna had very little understanding of slouch hats and geniuses. But when Heini refused the invitation, that suited Klaus Baas pretty well, for he was not looking after old acquaintances. What had he to do with Heini Peters?

One rainy late afternoon in June, as Klaus was coming up from the harbor where he had been supervising the loading of a valuable consignment, he saw Heini Peters walking from the Steintor toward the Glockengiesserwall. In the same old clothes, with the slouch hat far back on his head, he was walking along under an old umbrella, carrying a big funeral wreath. Curious as to the meaning of the wreath, Klaus Baas went up to shake hands with him.

"Well," he said to Heini, "where are you bound for?"

Pointing up the Glockengiesserwall, Heini said solemnly, "To St. George's cemetery, Klaus! Everything there is being dug up and laid waste because the new terminal station is to be there. I brought forward a motion to have the body of our great poet's sweetheart, who lies

<sup>1</sup>"I earn a dollar a day, Klaus! Just think, a whole dollar! You're another kind of chap, Klaas Hinrich! You're a terrible fellow! You're a tiger!"

there, transferred to another grave in Ohlsdorf. The motion was approved, Klaus. And the sacred deed is about to take place." Heini was in a state of absolute bliss; there was a soft, tender light in his wise, kind eyes. "Only think of it," he said, "his dear little sweetheart! She was the one that was nearest and dearest to him for ten long years, the years when he went through the most, too. She was the only one he had."

Suddenly it began to rain, and Klaus Baas put up his umbrella. "Suppose people tried to make such a fuss about all the sweethearts Hamburg merchants have or have had, Heini!" he said, with a smile. "Just think of that, pray!"

Heini Peters made a gesture calculated to wipe the whole force of Hamburg merchants out of his way. "Don't be profane," he said. "What is a kind of coffee-bag like you in comparison with this man! But you don't understand anything about that. You read him once, of course, and I guess you read him pretty thoroughly. But you don't know anything about the real soul in his books or in his life." Heini went on to tell what difficulties he had had in arranging things, and how at last he had got two senators to be present at the ceremony. "Just think, Klaus — suppose the old girl could know that — that a Hamburg senator was going to be at her grave — perhaps two of them! How her transfigured spirit will rejoice at the honor done her in this hour! See, this is the way we go — you'll come too, won't you, to celebrate this deed of pious remembrance? The service won't last more than half an hour at the most. And not a soul is observing us! If they knew what we are about, they would all stop to watch us; indeed, I think they would join us."

Again Klaus Baas shrugged his shoulders sceptically. "Heini, my boy," he said, "I hardly think they would. Most of the people walking around here would say, 'What? a poet? what have we got to do with a poet?' And the rest would say, 'Leave her lying where she is now. We've got trouble enough with living folks.'"

Heini Peters looked around him. "Do you really think



so?" he said, uncertainly. Then, taking heart again, he went on more confidently. "But the spirits of all the mighty dead, and the best of the living, commend us and accompany us on this pilgrimage."

Klaus Baas had his doubts about that too, but not wishing to spoil Heini's mood, he kept quiet.

They reached the worn old gray gate of the cemetery and passed along an overgrown path into a place of green and sheltered peace. Elder branches overhung the road, and heavy jasmine boughs gleamed white. Over graves long since sunken leaned crooked gravestones with dandelions and forget-me-nots growing around them; over tall crosses ivy climbed in thick clusters. Humming-birds and bees buzzed among the thick green. Here and there stood a silent yew. Heavy raindrops kept falling, every one of them making a separate splash. And now, in this very place of silence, stands the busiest, noisiest concern in northern Germany. All day and all night, above ground and below it, goes on the unceasing whirring and rattling, thumping and shrieking, rumbling and whistling, of a great terminal station.

Passing around a big branching linden that blocked the path, they brushed through the tall tendrils of a wild rose-bush and reached a small sunken building with tall grass around it and elder and syringa leaning against the crumbling walls. There they found a whitehaired old workman sitting on a freshly tarred box. He had his spade in one hand, and in the other a bottle, from which he was just taking a good swig.

"Well, Meier," said Heini Peters, solemnly, "you're here, are you? Then suppose we go and open the grave."

Turning around a little on the box, the old man pointed his spade at a rotten, blackened coffin board, on which lay a poor little heap of dust and decayed bones. "There she is, Peters," he said.

Heini Peters's face fell, and his eyes grew big. "That?" he said. "Are you sure, Meier?"

The old man had got his pipe out of his pocket and was pressing the tobacco down with his finger. "Yes, I'm

sure," he said. "It's the right number. She was a very small person, Peters."

More and more puzzled, Heini Peters gazed at the wretched, remarkably small heap of decaying bones, a few pieces of the skull, a little brown hair, a few other bones and bits of coffin—all mingled with a little earth, on the board. Finding his tongue at last, he looked up and said, "Where is the coffin, Meier?"

The old man tapped the box he was sitting on.

"Do you mean she's to go in that box?"

The old man nodded.

"When are the other gentlemen coming, Meier?"

"I don't know anything about them," said the old man.

"There's no one coming, Peters."

Heini Peters shook his head. "Well!" he said. Then looking again at the poor little remains, he slowly recovered himself. "That is she!" he said. "Mercy, how little she was, Klaus! What a remarkably tiny person! But this woman here gave her love to that tall, square-built man, when he lived here, unknown and poor. And many a time she fed him; for he was hungry, too. No one in the whole big city was his friend. Not another soul offered him love and bread as did this poor, elderly little seamstress. That is why he clung to her. He would certainly have liked to have a more aristocratic and beautiful woman, Klaus; for he was a tall, handsome man, even if his clothes weren't good, and he had a proud spirit, and taste, too. Ah, Klaus, what must this wise little woman have endured when she met that great unhappy soul somewhere one day—somewhere on the street, perhaps, maybe up there on the Glockengiesserwall, on the steps of some house, or in her father's workshop. It was no easy guest that lay drinking her coffee there in her little sewing room. And then when she bore him children! He was not there when she bore the children, nor when she laid them in their little coffins. By that time he was able to be gay, and almost grotesquely merry somewhere abroad, in spite of his poverty, harshness, and strangeness. And with his place in the world a little more assured, he was able to take pleasure

in more than one young woman. But when he sat down to write to this little creature, — look, to this poor little soul here — he wrote letters that were sharp, tormenting, terrible. Holofernes let loose on a little seamstress! At last they became so dreadful that his friend burned them, so that they would not stain his image — the image of the great poet. Falsehood, Klaus, all falsehood and lies! We've got to take people exactly as they are; and we must blame and admire and sympathize, all at once, with the great souls of the world. Oh, mad and noble poet! Oh, the woe of the poet's existence! The fate of a too proud soul in this philistine world. And alas, thou poor sweetheart of his! Ah, Klaus, how frightfully checkered is this life of ours! And see, Klaus, even if this woman did not deserve a monument for loving and feeding the poet, we might well give her one as a testimony to all the innumerable dear women whom we self-seeking men have taken possession of just because we happened to need them. Why isn't anybody at all here, Meier? I was sure at least one senator would come!"

The old man raised his pipe mournfully. "I don't know, Peters," he said.

Klaus Baas shrugged his shoulders under the umbrella. "You say the poet didn't concern himself about her!" he said. "How could you expect a senator to?"

Heini Peters bent solicitously over the poor little remains, which the gently falling rain was slowly washing. Picking up a small smooth bone, still fairly white, a part of one of the fingers of the right hand, he wiped it off on the wet grass and stuck it in his vest pocket. "Then I am going to put the remains in the box," he said, in a broken voice. "Sit down over there, Meier. I will do it all by myself."

Rising from the box, the old man sat down on an old coffin stool on the sunken threshold, took a sip from his flask, and proceeded to watch Heini Peters. Klaus Baas held the umbrella over Heini while he collected the bones.

When everything was in the box, Heini Peters and the

old man carried it to the gate, where a hearse was waiting. They lifted the box in, and then Heini Peters seated himself on the floor beside it, where he was sheltered from the rain. "There is still another near relative of our poet around here," he said. "He is a sailor, and he's a little coarse and vulgar now. I believe I'll look him up; I think I'll get him all right. She's going to have an awfully pretty resting place in Ohlsdorf, Klaus, and she will get her monument, too. I'm going over there this Sunday with my friend, — a fine woman, Klaus!" Realizing the oddity of his situation and of his flitting thoughts, he laughed. "I had expected something rather different, Klaus," he said, "a senator's carriage, with a coachman." He laughed to himself.

Klaus Baas shook his head disapprovingly. "You're an odd fish, Heini Peters! How can a man absolutely forget himself and his own life in thinking about other people — and especially dead ones, as you do? And I wager you've paid the expenses of this performance yourself. You won't get anywhere by that sort of thing, Heini."

Heini Peters blushed, annoyed at the suddenness and tactlessness of the attack, rather than at his assailant. "Well," he said, "I've been pretty fanciful in my time, and I've often been deceived; but still I've often been very happy, Klaus, and I've made a good many other people happy, too, and shown them some great and good things. And," he went on, with an air of gentle superiority, "there's nothing in the Bible, Klaus, that says we oughtn't to imagine so much, but it does say that we oughtn't to calculate so much. 'Then the devil took him up on a high mountain and showed him all the treasures of the world.'"

"Come, now," said Klaus, not in the least understanding what he was driving at, "you're beside yourself. Now you'd better be off."

Heini Peters would have liked to put it more plainly, but he was too weak and embarrassed. With a gentle confused little laugh, he expressed his old time opinion —

“You’re a tiger, Klaas Hinrich ! Now start on, driver. Still it was nice to have you here, Klaus !”

With that the hearse rolled away.

When Klaus Baas got home, he told Sanna what he had been doing, laughing about it all, shaking his head at the same time. She was surprised that he seemed to be so much interested in a thing of that kind, and yet in a way she felt the touching beauty of it all herself. Half pleased and half angry, she thought, “There are sides to his nature that I don’t know at all. Outside of them he is just filled up with work — work, and me and the children.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

KLAUS was always on guard. He was not one of those for whom things "run as usual" as they do with people whose families have lived in the same conditions to the third and fourth generation. Everything remained new to him. Secretly he was constantly amazed at his own surroundings, at his rooms at the office, at his aristocratic brother-in-law, who continued to be cool to him, at the Exchange and his acquaintances there; and beyond these, at the little house overlooking the Elbe, which was now his own, at his self-possessed, fine-looking wife, and his pretty children, in their dainty light clothes. And all these things, as a source of self-satisfaction and confidence, aroused and strengthened in him a new pride. "How far along I have got!" he thought. "And I will get farther still. I must get more money—and with it more credit; and with that, more power!"

Sanna told him that he was entirely too strenuous, and didn't save enough of his energy for her and the children. "You would still like to be Czar of Russia," she said, "just as you wanted to be when you were a boy playing among the trees in the graveyard. You don't have enough time left for us and for other people, and above all, for yourself."

Her words disquieted him, for he felt their truth; but he refused to feel it very clearly, and was soon absorbed in business again. He was one of those men, numerous enough among our progressive people in those years, and to-day as well, who, having reached a high position by their own will and zeal, set the looms humming and the hammers striking all over the country, and bring labor and money into it. Ceaselessly, all the time, evenings and

Sundays too, they follow their irresistible impulse to labor, to conceive, and to execute, swiftly, secretly, and cleverly, schemes that will win them power and distinction.

For several years the business with Shanghai had quietly and steadily developed. Then, one summer, their correspondence grew more animated. Far-sighted people were just beginning to perceive that a war was bound to come in the far East. The point at issue with the firm was whether they should go shares with the young man from Lübeck in supplying rapidly and adequately certain goods which they had already been sending to Shanghai, but which, in case of war, would be needed in great haste and in great quantities. H. C. Eschen was to do this on joint account with the Lübeck man. The difficulty and risk consisted in knowing whether the war would actually come and in making no great mistake as to the time when it would break out.

Arthur Eschen saw the letters and approved them, but he gave neither time nor thought to them. He was giving himself up more and more to his affected interests and to his restless society life. His desk was littered more than ever with his club and art correspondence. And he was away often. When Klaus Baas tried to get his attention, Eschen looked either indifferent or ill at ease. Klaus complained about it again to Sanna. "I don't know for the life of me what's the matter with your brother," he said. "I'm used to his not working right, and it doesn't surprise me any more, but it really seems to me that he doesn't get off his bright sayings any more, and that disturbs me considerably. I hope he isn't up to any foolishness." Sanna shrugged her shoulders and said nothing, for that point was a fertile source of quarrels. She secretly reproached Klaus with lack of understanding for people like her brother, and injustice to them.

But when, a little later, he brought up the subject again, she said, "I've been meaning to speak to you about that for several days. Arthur's wife was here two weeks ago and again yesterday, and was talking along in her usual way about Paris and everything they were doing

and getting. And I remarked incidentally that all that cost a lot of money, and went on to say that you and I were both saving so that we could more than triple what we have now in ten years' time. I said that we managed to do that, although we had four children, while she never had a dollar left, although she had no children at all. She got restless, and showed plainly that she wanted to pump me. She said that the firm had been making good profits, even though there had been a sudden falling off during the last month."

"What?" said Klaus, all attention. "A falling off? a falling off last month? That's absolute nonsense—a falling off? She must certainly have said a drop! But a drop! That looks precious like speculation, Sanna! A drop? That's it,—tin has gone down! Of course that's it—it's the tin! Well! So, Sanna, your dear brother Arthur has probably been venturing a little without my knowing it! Of course he hasn't endangered any one else!"

She turned away angrily. "It isn't right for you to say 'your dear brother Arthur' in that scornful way," she cried.

"You're right," he said gravely. "But you are often too quick about taking his side, Sanna! Well, anyway, I'll just ask him! I'll confront him with this business. Aside from the fact that it's risky, a man like your brother never has any luck in things like that. I, for one, don't know what the luck depends on—maybe on having a kind of a knack at it, maybe on keeping cool, and maybe on providence. All I know is that *he* doesn't have any luck. And I don't like to think of the prospect, Sanna—think of Arthur and Lizzy Eschen poor! But after all, what business is it of mine! But I do say that my associate has got to be a serious business man, or else I'll hunt up another partner."

The next morning he told Arthur Eschen straight out what he suspected. Biting his lips in vexation, Eschen admitted that he had been speculating in order to cover his heavy household expenses, and told Klaus how far he



had gone. He had lost about forty thousand marks. They had a short and rather violent altercation, which ended in Arthur Eschen's leaving the office pale and angry, declaring that after all the things his brother-in-law had said to his face, he didn't think he could ever work with him again. He did stay away for several days; then he came back, and for a while applied himself more regularly.

But the discovery had made Klaus lose all confidence in him. He told himself that Arthur Eschen had adopted this comfortable, uncertain way of living once and for all, that he would always be clay in his wife's hands, and that there was no use trying to change him. The constantly recurring claims he and his wife allowed life to make on them would always prompt him to try speculating again in order to make up the deficit. Besides, with such a luxurious partner, the firm's capital would never increase to any imposing degree. He began to weigh the idea of a separation, and to consider how, if this should come to pass, he could get a good partner with capital, or how he himself could become an associate in another firm.

In the midst of these weighty deliberations, he happened to learn one day at the Exchange that the junior partner of a very important Shanghai firm was hopelessly ill — so people said — and had been sent to the Riviera. In a flash Klaus began to wonder excitedly whether he might in any possible way get taken into the firm. He certainly had associations in Shanghai which they had not; and for years it had been plain to him that the senior partner of the firm, a certain Herr Hasse, was very well disposed toward him. The firm would certainly not be able to get along for a very long while without the absent member, and would have to be looking around for some one to take his place. Their capital was already so large that a really good man, even if he hadn't much capital, would satisfy them. But then, when he considered the size of the firm, he didn't see much hope in the scheme, after all. And in his usual way he began to feel resentful at Arthur Eschen

for making him cast about thus among such vague ideas and hopes—all of which certainly proceeded from his own overreaching will. He made up his mind, however, to set the thing in motion with great caution. To that end, he would have to become better acquainted with Herr Hasse personally than he could become by meeting him occasionally on the Exchange. Herr Hasse was distantly related to his sister-in-law, so Klaus got her to ask him there to one of her dinners. He counted on being able to find out casually, on this occasion, what Herr Hasse thought of war in the East. If Herr Hasse came to know him better in this way, and if the war arrangements Klaus had in view struck him favorably, Klaus could perhaps venture to offer himself.

Sanna was glad to get out of the house and out of Blankenese again, for she had been tied there all summer. Making Klaus promise to leave the office in good time, she sent him off to town and set about inspecting her best clothes.

As Klaus Baas was leaving the office that evening at dark—for it was September—it occurred to him that if he could find it, he ought to buy a present for his oldest daughter, who would have her twelfth birthday party in a few days. Up to this time Sanna had always attended to the presents, declaring that he didn't think or care about that sort of thing. But Sanna had a way of calmly assuming things like that; and Klaus made up his mind to show what he could do, and, by getting a pretty gift, to display himself to his wife and big daughter in a new light. In view of the war transactions, he certainly could permit himself a slight extra expenditure. Proceeding to the Neuenwall, he walked along past the lighted shops, hunting for something that would do. He found his errand difficult. Sanna could pay out a hundred marks once in a while for something pretty rather than necessary without having her conscience trouble her in the least, but Klaus never had been able to and couldn't learn to. He soon grew impatient. Just then, looking in the window of a new art shop he was passing, he saw in a pretty paste-

board box a buckle made of old silver — the sort of thing a little girl like his would like to wear in her belt. Klaus bent to look at it, with eyes that were not so good as they had been thirteen years before — for instance, when he had taken his last walk, with the oak staff, through the Holstein woods. On the two plates of the buckle there was a pretty, simple engraving, presenting two naked children dancing toward each other, one arm and one foot touching in a way that made a picture of light and graceful motion. The lid of the box, which was turned back, bore, in pretty gold printing, the inscription, "After a design by Doris Rotermund."

Straightening up, Klaus went into the shop and bought the trinket. Refusing to let them wrap it up, he started off in the calm, September twilight toward Harvestehude. He kept his hand around the box in his coat pocket, and his thoughts travelled strangely toward his home country, and toward his whole past life.

He stood still when he reached the parapet of the Lombards-Brücke as if to look out over the Binnen-Alster for a while. He drew the box out furtively and opened it. The two naked children must certainly be hers. And he thought how much he would like to see how she and all the old country were getting along. He gazed meditatively out over the water, that rippled with a bluish mother-of-pearl lustre. Far out over it lights gleamed brightly. Behind on the Jungfernstieg, in front of the great dark gray walls of the houses, myriad lights gleamed and sparkled — stretching out in long rows, now standing still, now gliding. And over the houses was the deep blue of the sky. Klaus had seen it all so many times — and had paid so little attention to it. Yet it was singularly lovely. It was a pity he had never had time to give his attention to things like that — that his spirit had always been so fixed and tense, always on guard. On the last Christmas Eve, after he had closed the office, at about four, he had stayed there for a while alone at his desk, and a kind of yearning had come over him. He had felt somehow that he was not a young man any longer, and

he had wished that he might go a little more slowly. But then he had told himself that he could not — that he must work on and on ; he had no resources of long standing, as most of the others had. And so the mood had left him and he had forgot all about it. Now it had come back. Well, such moods were perfectly natural as one grew old, and he was almost forty-five. At that age a man's original driving, hurrying impulse slackened somewhat, and he began to feel the need of going more slowly. A man has to stop and look around him sometimes.

It was singularly pleasant to stand there with a picture like that before him, just as if he were a painter or a poet ; to let the beauty of things play peacefully upon him without feeling any need of passing judgment. Yes, it would certainly be fine, and would do him a lot of good, to walk around his old home for several days, all alone. He would go to see the old friends and old places of which, absorbed as he had been in the busy present, he had not thought for many a year. And with them he would revive old times, with a heart full of fair and peaceful thoughts — oh, so fair and peaceful. He thought of a Bible verse he had learned in school — “ Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth ; but they have not prevailed against me ” — and with unconscious arrogance he applied it to himself. It would certainly be fine to walk around peacefully and reflect on all the troubled yet beautiful course of life. It would certainly do his soul an infinite amount of good. “ I should like to see the old country again,” he thought ; “ and Doris Rotermund, and all the rest. It's fourteen years now since I've seen all that — fourteen years ! What a big slice out of life that is ! What a long road it has been ! Oh, it's all strange. Life — why, life will soon be over and past ! I'd like to have a broader, more relaxed life from now on. These last fourteen years have been far too strenuous.”

Slipping the trinket slowly back into his pocket, he went on through the peaceful evening. His soul, usually so stiff and tense, expanded blissfully, took unto itself wings, and brooded over the broad silent landscape of his

life. A boy coming along whistling finally roused him. Surprised at his reveries, he thought, with a smile, "The little trinket is responsible for all this — and the beautiful peaceful evening — and the broad stretch of water — and the years." Here and there over the rippling dark blue water glided the brightly lighted ferry-boats. Along the shore, far and near, from out the mysterious blue depths rose golden lights. In front of the brightly lighted ferry-house the boats lay like dark masses. The music stopped, and a gay shouting sounded from boat to boat. From Raben Strasse two girls crossed the street and went toward the bridge, probably on the way to their own boat. In a few years his own two oldest children, the girl and the boy, would be about that size. Dear thoughtful children they were, too! When they were as old as those two, they should certainly have a boat of their own too, a good stout sailboat on the Elbe. But perhaps by that time it would be better to move in to town, to Harvestehude, where it would be more comfortable for him and Sanna, and where the children would have more company. And some day their boat would fly full colors. Everything in his life would grow more quiet, more benignant, more peaceful, less rapid. He had always gone too fast. Drawing out the box and opening it, he studied the trinket again in the reflection from the lights sparkling over the water. He thought about the beautiful quiet country from which the little gift had come, and of the hand that had fashioned it, of the little creature that would wear it, of her beautiful kindly mother — in fact, of everything that made up his life. And his reflection brought him a feeling of calm and blissful happiness he had never known before.

When he reached his brother-in-law's house, almost all the guests had assembled already on the terrace and in the garden. He hunted out Sanna at once. "How straight and pretty she looks standing there, the mother of my children!" he thought to himself, falling in love with her all over again. He took his stand beside her, asking about several women he did not know, and passing immediate judgment on them in his usual severe way.

Then Uncle Eberhard discovered them, and came up to show Sanna a new acquisition. And Sanna, who was to inherit his collection, bent her yellow head down to the little man and made a great show of interest. An elderly lady from Bremen, a distant relative of the Eschens, who had always been curious about the man whom handsome, independent Sanna Eschen had surprised her family by marrying, came up and began to talk about St. Moritz. Klaus, listening with his head politely inclined, was really thinking, "What do I care about St. Moritz?" and was considering how he could approach Hasse, and make a good impression on him, and so help along his big secret scheme.

At the foot of the terrace, in the reflected light from the lamp, stood the tall, somewhat loosely built figure of the host, with the rest of the guests, business men, a lawyer, and a clergyman. The clergyman was telling some droll stories from the town clubs. And there was some talk of the last regatta. The hostess and several other ladies were grouped around a tall, good-looking man belonging to a family of Jewish bankers. He had drifted away from the family calling into the study of the history of the fine arts, and the ladies were questioning him about a new publication on Florence in the time of the Renaissance. Klaus, having no interest in any of this, stood there in bored indifference, waiting for Hasse.

At last he appeared. He was a large, middle-aged man, a bachelor. With his sturdy figure, he could have been mistaken for a country gentleman. Klaus Baas succeeded in making Sanna understand that she was to occupy herself with the lady, who by this time had progressed from St. Moritz by way of Geneva to Paris. He overheard her saying to Sanna, "I can understand now, Sanna, why you were willing to become Frau Baas in such a hurry. You've got a nice, good-looking husband — yes, really, one that's everything he ought to be, Sanna." Klaus Baas laughed in his sleeve. "That's right — so she has." Then he went over to his brother-in-law, sure that Hasse, who had been buttonholed by the clergyman, would come over there to say good evening.

He came, and greeted Klaus Baas too. Knowing that Hasse took no great stock in subjects that had no connection with business, Klaus produced a joke that was just going around on the Exchange. His laugh, which was as contagious and hearty as his father's had been, attracted Hasse, who, glad to find somebody of his own sort, said, "Let's go off there in the corner among the bronzes. The party around your brother-in-law is already deep in sailing and regattas; old Uncle Eberhard is buried in his seals; and of course the ladies over there are in Italy. I haven't anything against women when you can get them one at a time; in fact, they can be very charming. But I can't get along at all with a lot of them together." Sitting down in easy chairs, protected by a big round table, they were soon deep in a comfortable contemplation of old times. "When I came here as a young man there were such and such export firms" — then followed a comparison with the present. From there Klaus led him on to the history of the Eschen family. He recalled Karl Eschen — for even the dead must help him now; then they proceeded from the forests of the interior of India to Shanghai. After a while Klaus Baas put in a few cautious, yet frank, questions about Herr Hasse's career. As Klaus had intended, they brought in return several questions from Herr Hasse about this and that in Klaus's life, and gave him a chance to do a little well-concealed boasting about how he had risen from a humble condition to what he was now, even after counting out the six years spent in the country. They argued good-naturedly about the future of China and the possibility of a war there. And finally Klaus expressed his regret at the illness of Herr Hasse's partner, who was not getting along very well on the Riviera.

They were interrupted by the call to dinner. Everybody went into the grand dining room and sat down. The clergyman told about a vicar, now dead, and a very clever materialistic merchant, whose relationship was remarkable because they had such satisfactory talks together, the difference in their point of view seeming to lend to their conversation a singular spice. The lawyer had been rum-

maging among some old family records, and had come across the bill of lading of a ship that had run the continental blockade a hundred years before. He mentioned the prices of the goods. That prompted a middle-aged merchant, who had been doing his duty valiantly by the dinner, to talk about Hamburg smoked meats. He tried to set forth the history of that famous article, but it remained fragmentary. Then a young merchant retailed in pigeon English the conversation he had had with a coolie in Hongkong about his religion. That led another guest to relate, with the aid of Spanish, something about the faith of the original inhabitants of Mexico. And then that gave the dark little Renaissance man an opportunity to tell, in his animated way, what he thought the soul of a Lorenzo Medici was like. Arthur Eschen talked to his wife about the latest automobile accidents with an interest that made Klaus Baas fear he would fall a victim to that sport next. Suddenly Sanna Eschen's laugh rang out gayly. She was sitting beside the lawyer, with whom she had gone to kindergarten. She declared that he used to stutter in those days; he called it a bold, saucy fib, but very like her. To prove her point, she imitated the way he had talked. Hasse let his hostess talk society to him, but he did not seem to listen very well, for every now and then he looked absent-mindedly over at Klaus Baas, as if in his thoughts he was still talking to him. Klaus Baas let the lady from St. Moritz chatter on undisturbed. She had struck the British Museum by this time, and all that Klaus had to do was to put in an occasional yes or no. When now and then he recalled his thoughts from business, and looking up, met Sanna's big eyes or Hasse's calm glance, he felt that these two liked him. And that was enough.

After supper he considered whether he had better try to bring about a continuation of their talk. But since Hasse gave him no opportunity, he and Sanna started for home.

In the train and on the road in Blankenese he spoke in his confident way about the talk he had had with Hasse



and how he had done a good thing for himself. And he lost himself in Sanna, who lured him on with her beauty, and who plainly was very much in love with him that evening, for she clung to him and held his hand as they walked. When they reached home, he did not take up the evening paper, but asked her to sit with him just as she was for a little while and talk. "Now that woman from St. Moritz, Sanna," he said in surprise; "did what she was telling about interest you? It bored me awfully. What do I care about St. Moritz and Egypt and Rome, and all the other pleasure trips? Those are for people whose hands have grown soft because their grandparents have spared them too much. I've got both my feet planted right here in Hamburg, here in the present—I don't care where, down on the Strandweg or at the Dammtor or along the harbor or anywhere you happen to see me."

Sitting beside him in her pretty silk gown, she looked at him with her big shining eyes. She liked now and then to hear his "Heisterberg talk," for it made her feel that she had married a very clever, individual, strong man. And that she simply had to feel.

"I was amazed at the clergyman," Klaus went on. "You really couldn't tell the difference between him and a merchant or a lawyer, either in his looks or his talk. And that doesn't seem right to me. Now any Hamburg citizen of good family, any merchant or lawyer, is a direct product of conditions, self-seeking, positive, discreet, and clever. But a clergyman ought to be different. He ought to be a simple man—a man that has discovered the truth, not by picking it up on the street or in society, but in delving in the depths of the world and of men's spirits and of his own soul. And you ought to be able to see that by seeing him and hearing him talk. Come sit on my knee, Sanna."

She listened for a moment for sounds from the nursery, then sat down on his knee. "Well, what else surprised you?" she asked.

"Everything surprises me when I am at Harvestehude. Now just take that clever, cultivated Jew. His soul is

altogether taken up with the beautiful things of life; it's like a stately room hung with pictures, full of statues and beautiful art objects, handsome rugs, and distinguished old books on the tables. In the room of my spirit, Sanna, there is still only a plain wooden table with six chairs around it, occupied by mother and father and the rest of my people; and among them is our dead Lotte, who would probably be living to-day if she had been the child of wealthy people. Around the walls of this plain room hang other pictures of my hard youth. There hasn't been either time or space for fine ornaments — and so the room has just stayed that way, and is so now. I like to hear about those other things, but I can't be curious enough about them. I can't really take them seriously enough to enjoy them whole-heartedly."

"That's true," she said with a sigh; "you are a peasant."

He stroked her soft light hair more firmly, patting it down on both sides of her cheeks till she looked quite girlish. "Even so," he said, "I don't think I am in any sense less cultivated than you, or less distinguished, or less educated. A lot of people think that a man from a workman's family, without higher education, a merchant, and a regular tiger for energy, can't possibly think of anything else but making money. Well, it isn't true! When I was a boy and a young man, I was a dreamer, given to all kinds of idealism. I read the best things that wise and noble men have thought about God and the world. And I thought about them, too, and still think about them, not, to be sure, in the way of ornament or sport or talk, as so many do, but because such thought seems to me bitterly necessary. I'm not in the least lazy or indifferent about the greatest things in life; on the contrary, like any right-thinking, serious person, I concern myself with them a great deal. It's true that I have deliberated about them slowly and weightily and cautiously. I haven't gone over in a hurry to Buddha or Nietzsche, but I have stuck to the God of Christianity, however true it is that I know him and believe in him and fear him less than I did when I used to say my prayers in school with my hands folded

over my slate, in Heisterberg. I don't feel any longer like a sheep or a subject, but like a constitutional citizen, who has all kinds of rights, natural and vested too. There's only one thing —"

So he boasted along.

Secretly more and more drawn to him, Sanna stroked his hair. "There's only one thing?" she said. "What were you going to say?"

He looked meditatively past her. "I really think, though," he said, "that I'm not doing quite the right thing. I think I'll have to allow myself more time. Now take a countryman who can walk slowly and comfortably over the fields in the times when he isn't at work, while I — I'm always at work. And to think I'm forty-five," he said, almost solemnly.

In his tone there was something quite new to Sanna. "Well," she said, with a low laugh, "what is it? You don't mean to say you are falling off your high horse at last? Who can have come after you with the tongs?"

With a good deal of difficulty, since Sanna was leaning against his breast, he reached into his coat pocket and brought out the box. "I bought this to-day for Lieselotte's birthday gift," he said. "See — this is what did it."

Opening the box, she looked at the buckle, and then at the name. "That's the one that was once 'so good' to you, as you call it, isn't it?" she said, rather quietly, drawing away from him a little.

Pulling her back, he said, "I saw this name, and the whole experience came back to me. And the walk along the Alster was lovely. Altogether I got to thinking all sorts of pleasant things, and for the first time in my experience I was able to take a calm, slow survey of my whole life. Once in a while it is absolutely necessary for a man to take a good look all around him. I've always worked too much, too hastily, and too one-sidedly. My life has lacked calm and breadth and beauty and the spirit of play."

"The things those other people have," Sanna said significantly.

“Yes,” he said, in some perplexity, “that’s true. But still it’s different. The things they have I never can get now, and I don’t want them. I’m too plain and serious for that, and my youth was too narrow and too hard. But now and then I must have time to go on a long peaceful walk. I must read a good book in a leisurely way once in so often. I must take a restful little trip with you. And above all, I want to visit my old home country for several days. And I want to go absolutely alone to see all the things I used to know there. I’m going to start to-morrow — to be gone three days — otherwise I’ll never get to it.”

“Do you want to see this Doris Rotermund too?” she asked coldly.

Taking her head between his hands, he said, “Tell me what you were thinking of when you looked across the table at me this evening, at dessert?”

Embarrassed, she said, “You know perfectly well, Klaus.”

Drawing her closer to him, he said, “Oh, Sanna, if only the Shanghai affair goes right —”

“Good gracious!” she said, “do at least shut up about business now. It’s past midnight.”

## CHAPTER XXV

THE trip back home was postponed. Work went on as usual in October, except that there was an unusual strain on account of the prospect of war. In December Klaus went to Berlin and to Saxony and contracted with several firms to have blankets, cloth, and canvas furnished. The contracts were essentially binding for both parties, but their validity was to depend on a despatch that Klaus might or might not send. He made sure of credit to a corresponding degree. After arranging all these matters in high good spirits, fairly glorying in the joy of adventure, he awaited the letter from his friend in Shanghai.

He found the letter when he reached the office in the morning, a few days later. The man from Lübeck said that according to news sent him from a friend in Japan, war was sure to break out soon. He would probably send a telegram very shortly, asking the Hamburg house to close the contracts they had arranged so that the goods could be delivered in eight weeks.

That very afternoon, as Klaus was getting ready to leave the office, the despatch came, and with it the information that the goods could be sold at a good profit, but that everything depended on getting them there quickly. Going at once to the agent of the factories, who was still in his office, Klaus signed the contracts. Then he considered whether their credit with the bank would suffice.

During the next few weeks, he was not only very tense, but very restless and irritable. The fact that he had never taken a real vacation or rest was telling on his strong nerves, and the clearly defined need of rest he had felt, and then ignored, was having its revenge. He car-

ried the change for an extra edition in his overcoat pocket, and, as superstitious as a bad speculator, cherished a fixed idea that the business would miscarry if the change got lost in any way. On Christmas Eve he was only dimly conscious of the children's fun and of Sanna's playing with them. He was altogether preoccupied with business; there was urgent need of further consignments and other arrangements for India; and working power and credit had both been stretched to the utmost. Pacing absorbedly up and down in the next room, he said to Sanna, "If this affair goes well, I'll never work so hard again, and I'll have more time and thought left for you. You shall have as good a husband and father as you could wish." Sanna simply shrugged her shoulders, and busied herself with the children again.

When he got home one evening in early February, Sanna said that her sister-in-law had been there, and had been giving her various bits of news—among them, the fact that her husband was sleeping so badly that she feared for his health. Worried as Klaus was, he only half listened to what Sanna was saying, thinking superficially, "How can the man get sick now, or even be conscious of his body at all, when I'm all keyed up?" "Well," he said indifferently to Sanna, "I don't mind if he has a few sleepless hours, Sanna. He has slept away a good many hours of his lifetime."

Again Sanna could not brook his attack on her brother. This subject had really become a secret source of rancor between them. "You have a very different temperament from his," she said somewhat frostily. "You can sleep in spite of your troubles."

"Because I have a good conscience," he retorted largely.

Then, still pacing up and down, he went on pondering what he should do if the war did not come, or if it did not come till later. Should he nevertheless venture to send the goods, in conjunction with his friend in Shanghai?

"It's a little depressing to have you waiting for a war all the time," said Sanna after a while. "There's something so dreadful about a war."

He looked at her coldly, plainly thinking, "You a merchant's daughter, and talking like that!"

Sanna began again about her brother. "Do you know, Lizzy says he has such bad dreams," she said. "I think it must be awfully wearing."

"Let him dream," said Klaus, "it will do him good. There's the canvas and the cloth being loaded for us in Lusatia and Berlin right now,—think of it. Perhaps Arthur is paying the penalty for the tin he squandered last year."

His calm, arrogant tone vexed Sanna again, much as she loved his self-confidence. "You always forget that he was brought up differently from you," she said.

"No, I don't," he answered. "You were brought up as he was, and yet you're like me in counting up the cost of things. If you can do that, why can't your brother? I can't endure people who go through life in an atmosphere of absolute comfort and beauty, especially if they haven't the means for it. Don't stand up for your brother, Sanna Eschen."

In quarrelling with Sanna, he quite forgot that the old fear had struck him again a little while ago: "Can't sleep, can't he? Has bad dreams? It can't be that he's speculating again. It isn't possible, now when our credit is stretched to the utmost." And he went on thinking what he should do if the war didn't come within the next week.

The next morning as he was passing with the stream of people going to work out of the colonnade from the Dammtor station, he heard something being called from the corner of the Neuenwall. "The war!" he thought in a flash, all alive with excitement. Just then he saw his brother-in-law coming along from the Neue Jungfernstieg and crossing the street a few yards away. Klaus looked at him with sparkling eyes. The newsboys with the extras were coming up from the Grosser Bleichen and taking their stand among the throng. In a trice Klaus heard the contents of the first war despatch. Hurrying ahead, eager for work at the office, he said gayly to his brother-in-

law, "This comes just right. We can't help having luck."

Arthur Eschen came closer to him. "I'm going to tell you here, right away," he said; "you must find two hundred thousand marks. I—"

Klaus stood still as if he had been struck. People and houses rose and fell dizzily in front of him. Fixing his eyes on the ground, he walked on slowly, muttering in furious anger, "Get out—go away—or I'll hit you in the face." Arthur Eschen fell back and walked behind him.

At the office Klaus stood at the window trying to control his anger. "The damned fool! The stupid, shiftless simpleton! To throw away his good inheritance! Well, what has that to do with it? Where can I get two hundred thousand marks in a hurry? He'll have to find help himself. Think of selling the contracts for a small profit—it's outrageous—damnable." He beat against the window and gritted his teeth in a perfect passion. "Well, then, we've got to find a buyer. Who?"

Suddenly a bright idea struck him. "Suppose I go to Hasse and offer myself now! Now, when I have to do something! Who knows what the necessity was sent for? I'll go to Hasse at once. Perhaps one of them will have to go to China and they will need me so much the more. I must be calm. I'll have to tell them frankly what has happened—quite frankly. I'll say that I wanted to come to them after I had put this through successfully, but that I have to come now! Yes, that's what I'll do. I'll see whether I can make this blow turn out well."

He telephoned to ask Sanna to come in, took the contracts out of his cabinet, and set off for the Glockengieserwall.

It was one of the big new office buildings, with broad marble steps, high windows, easily running elevators, and handsome dark doors with names on them in shining letters. A clerk who knew Klaus by sight let him through the gate, asked him to wait a minute, and offered him a chair. Klaus sat there for a while among the busy young employees. Pens were flying; telephones ringing;



people were getting up here and there to get things; and through the open door of the chief's office came the sound of subdued conversation. Plainly the outbreak of war had set everything in motion here, too.

Finally the caller came out, and Hasse, who had accompanied him to the door, greeted Klaus with a look of slight surprise, ended his talk with the other man, and asked the new caller to come in. Klaus Baas told him briefly what had happened, adding that it was impossible for him to fulfil the contracts without help from outside. He asked whether Herr Hasse would perhaps be disposed to go in on them with him. Taking them out, he pushed them toward him.

With a brief remark about Arthur Eschen, Hasse bent over the contracts. As soon as he had cast his eye over them, he said, "We saw this day coming too, and we also have been somewhat fortunate in our guess at the time." Klaus Baas nodded politely and Hasse read on in silence. Finally, dropping the papers, he said that in general he was ready to take over the contracts, but that he would ask Klaus Baas to allow him a short conference with his associate. Might he tell him about Arthur Eschen too?

Klaus Baas nodded. Then, straightening up a little, he said politely, with a slow, dignified air: "Herr Hasse, I should like to make you a proposition now which you will accept or not, as you like. For a year I have been thinking of withdrawing from the Eschen firm, and my intention has been strengthened by what has just happened. Fourteen years ago I went into the firm with forty thousand marks. I have now two hundred thousand, without counting the profit I may expect from these contracts. You and your partner know my business record and my reputation. I assume that you know the value of my connections in Shanghai, and I surmise also that in these lively times you can hardly do without a third partner for very long. In view of these things, I should like to ask you whether in taking over these contracts you could in any way take me, with my small capital."

Hasse had listened with his eyes fixed attentively on Klaus's face. He simply nodded, and said, "I will discuss that with my partner, too."

Klaus Baas sat and waited. He felt like a storm-driven bird that sees familiar landmarks appear and then vanish below him. Well, away with such thoughts. His anger against Arthur Eschen bubbled up again. Suppose he should meet a rebuff here. It was Arthur Eschen who had put him in this position. But away with all that. How Sanna would look when he met her in the office and was able to say, "I'm going to be a partner with Hasse." And what an impression I'll make on this one — and that one — and the other. But better not think of it. He watched the door sharply.

Soon the two gentlemen returned. When the partner, Herr Thielen, a younger man than Hasse, had greeted Klaus, Hasse said at once that they accepted his proposition essentially. But they did not want to offend their junior partner, who was hopelessly ill, but who was a devoted business man and an exceptional worker, by filling his place entirely just yet. So they would propose an arrangement for the time being with the understanding that at the expiration of a certain time Klaus would become a partner. They hoped that in about two weeks he would have settled up his affairs with Arthur Eschen, in which they would be glad to interpose if they could help him — and that he would then come to them. By that time Herr Thielen would be leaving for China to be on the ground. After agreeing to come back in an hour or so, Klaus left the office.

When the door had closed behind him, a tremendous feeling of joyous pride welled up in him, in reaction from all the anger and worry he had felt. What would Sanna say, — Sanna and the children? What would the children think of this day, sometime when they were grown up! And how he could vaunt it all to his old mother! And to Sanna's mother! Now at last he was reaching a place in the world that would bear inspection. Had he really been born under a thatched roof in Heisterberg, and gone

to a village school? Overwhelmed with exuberant joy, he took great deep breaths, and his eyes glowed.

When he reached the office again, with this mood still upon him, Arthur Eschen was sitting at his desk. Sanna was standing there too, her face pale and her big eyes looking at Klaus warningly, as if to say, "Now don't you be so severe with my brother!" In his overreaching pride, his scorn and anger flared up again. Sanna at that man's side! With a haughty air, and a look that had suddenly become steely, he said, "I have offered the contracts to Hasse. Of course we have no funds. You approve of that, I suppose?"

Arthur Eschen nodded.

Going to his desk, Klaus went on, in the same cold, heartless tone: "Sanna, I am going to leave the Eschen firm. I don't want to be in the same room with your brother any longer."

Arthur Eschen started. Sanna flared up at once. "My brother has done nothing dishonest! It was his own money. You have no right to rail at him when he has had bad luck."

"No," Klaus said, "he hasn't done anything dishonest — if it wasn't dishonest to work very little and very desultorily for fourteen years and then take and waste the earnings my work created. What he has done has just been stupid—so stupid that I'd like to take that picture of his honorable grandfather hanging over his desk there and smash it over his head and make him wear it as a ruff along the Jungfernstieg."

Arthur Eschen stood up, pale as death. He contained himself, however, and said despairingly: "I will go. I may be easy-going and weak, but I am not dishonorable."

Sanna, quite beside herself now, cried, with a passionate, angry look at Klaus: "Oh, you! I saw when you came in that you were out of your senses with arrogance. You—you're the one that always knows everything, and has everything, and is everything! You've just got something now. I know what that look means. Don't you scorn my poor brother, you! Just wait till you see how your

own children turn out. Oh, you — you — I simply can't love you any more."

Klaus had grown paler and paler. In that moment he felt that everything was over between them. He went too far. "Then go with your brother," he said with cold indifference. "Let him support you."

Then he left the office and went slowly down the stairs again. He felt convinced that this sudden terrible quarrel had ended everything between him and Sanna. And it had all come so suddenly. He stood there for a moment to collect his thoughts. Then, hearing a door open behind him, he walked on. After so much thought as this, he had arrived at a secret feeling that it must come right again. But refusing to admit it to himself, he hugged the notion. "It's all over between us! What was it she said — she couldn't love me any more! If she said that, what if she did run after me? No, I won't. That is certainly no wife of mine. She must always have been secretly against me — and on the side of her own family. She has never really loved me."

He left the building and walked toward the Jungfernstieg, breathing in great draughts of the fresh cold west wind. "How sudden it all has been!" he thought, as he became more composed. "Am I mad, or are they? I was so happy about the way the Hasse arrangement turned out. Why did I have to get angry about her brother? But she was unjust — absolutely unjust! What was it she said — that I was out of my senses with arrogance? She shall be sorry for that. I — I won't let her rail at me! I won't see her for a long time! I've let her have far too many liberties; now she must come down a little."

Pulling himself together, he went back, according to the agreement, to the Glockengiesserwall to Hasse's. In a discussion of several hours, they readily came to an agreement about the contracts, about Klaus's present and future position in the firm, and about taking over the young man from Lübeck. But in the midst of all this business, a dull confused thought fluttered through Klaus's

consciousness — “I’m not at peace with Sanna. And now what good will this good fortune do me?”

Finally everything was arranged for the present, and Klaus got up to go. Hasse, noticing that he was agitated, remarked that he must have had a hard day.

“I had a pretty serious talk with my brother-in-law, as you may imagine,” Klaus answered gloomily, “and my wife was there too. This is very hard for her.” Then, more cheerfully, happy in suddenly seeing a way out of his trouble with Sanna, he added, “I’m sorry to have to bring this up just now, but to-morrow I must take a trip to my old home on some private business which I can’t put off. I’ll report here again on Thursday. I’ll be glad if you will please send any necessary communications to me in care of the Bahnhof Hotel in Neumünster.” With that he left.

When he got back to the office it was empty. He worked there for a while with the procurist, to whom he handed over certain pieces of work relating to his withdrawal from the firm. When the procurist had left the office, Klaus walked up and down sullenly for about an hour, thinking of Sanna and her brother, and stubbornly brooding over it all in bitter scorn. After all, wasn’t he of a great deal more importance than all the Eschens put together? Sanna had never really respected him, and now she had refused to love and honor him. It was a good thing for her to have to come down a little. And in spite of the pressure of work, it was right for him to make a several days’ visit back home, for now he had nothing in the world but the old home country and his old acquaintances there.

Sitting down, he wrote a short, cold note to Sanna, saying that he had to go back home, and would be at the office again on Thursday.

Then he took his bag and caught the night train north.

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE next afternoon he was riding in his brother's wagon, Peter sitting beside him holding the reins, along the quiet turnpike toward his native village. The solitary ride on the train the evening before and the sleepless hours he had passed had quieted and softened him. The plump, long-legged horse swung from side to side in a slow heavy trot: the old wagon jerked along behind it, rattling and creaking through the wet snow. A damp cold west wind blew in upon them from behind.

Brother Peter was telling how his mother, who was almost eighty, had visited them three years before. "I tell you she certainly did go through the house," he said, "with me and Trina and the children after her—and just took in everything. And when she went down to the dike, with all the rest of us following her; and when she saw the geese running around on the bar, she said she hoped the water wasn't going to dry up. And finally, when I was driving her back to town again, she just said, 'You ought to have got farther along in all these years.' And then she just looked my old nag up and down, kind of scornfully. I think we've taken care of ourselves pretty well. When we began we didn't have a thousand marks, and now, taking in the sheep and geese and all, we've got about six thousand. No, brother, that's all right; she's been a good mother, and I'll certainly go to Hamburg, when the time comes, and pay her my last respects. But I often say to Trina, 'I don't see how I ever happened to belong to a mother like that!'"

Klaus said that he and she got along finely now.

"Oh, well, you!" said Peter Baas. "That's a different thing altogether. You've learned a lot, and got pretty

well up in the world. Karl Gaul was in Hamburg lately to see about a little legacy, and he heard that you would soon be the richest man in Hamburg. I said that I didn't know whether it was true or not, and that it wasn't any business of mine anyway. I said that you had never held out your purse for me to dip into, though I've been in a tight place often enough, goodness knows. And I'd have been very glad to pay interest on it, and to pay it back in a few years. But I don't need to any more, I told him, for I'm over the uphill pull now!"

Near the village Klaus Baas got out, and his brother started back toward the thatched cottage by the dike. Standing in the wet snow, Klaus looked after him. Peter's last remarks to Klaus had evidently put him in a good humor with himself, for he seemed to be looking out comfortably over the fields as he drove, and to be cracking his whip with an air of great satisfaction. He was plainly pleased to have been able at last to make Klaus understand that he had expected help from him. "Well, just see," said Klaus to himself; "Peter was very cool and queer to me too. Well! Of course he did hand over all he had that time — out of the mattress. Well, but still, he was young then — and he wasn't a business man." Biting his lips, he looked after the wagon for some time. Finally he turned and walked silently into the village.

He scanned everything — every house, every tree, every person, to see whether he could recognize anything or any one, or tell what family he belonged to. There on the sandy road stood his old home, almost unchanged. There, inside that small, low window, he had slept, in clear, warm summer nights, as well as when the winter storms beat heavily against it. Other children were sleeping there now. Indeed, right now a little thing was standing at the gate he used to stand at, trying to catch his puppy and throw it over in the snow. The child's little face was quite strange to him. Klaus gravely surveyed the whole place; then he turned and walked away. He found the church unaltered; and around it the bare dark poplars still stood, their branches still blown to the east by the

west wind. And underneath them was the uneven graveyard, with its thin covering of gray snow broken here and there. And there was the low red wall with its thick round stones. But where were those that had played there? His brother had told him that a few were still at home; some were abroad; a few had died already, as if eager to be the first to get into those green graves. Everything was changed. He had expected his trip home to be different, but it all seemed to be lost to him. There was nothing for him here. Everything seemed to him to be sulkily refusing to speak, or else dumb, and unable to. He certainly had nothing in the world now but the little nest in Blankenese — that dear little home of his, and that dear wife. Proud and obstinate, was she? Well, so was he. Just as much as she, every bit. And more! He had worked hard and been very successful, and that makes a man so — well, rather big and boastful inside. She was quite right; she had wise eyes, and saw things as they were. He would have to be more kindly, have more understanding of other people's characters and natures. Well, he would; and now things would go along more peacefully, more benignantly, and more slowly. He would go more than halfway and make up with Sanna. And he had been so beautifully successful in that matter with Hasse.

He took one more long look at the silent field, at the church, at Pastor Jensen's sunken vault, and at the low wall in the growing darkness. Then he walked sadly away from the village to the turnpike which led to a little station.

An hour later, peering out of the window, when it had grown quite dark, he saw the familiar clumsy tower and the lane bordered by bare chestnut trees, now grown huge. When he got off the train he went down to the square, silently scanning this and that house, and peering down the narrow streets. "How narrow everything was here," he thought, "and how unhappy I was!" There was the market-place; there was the quiet street leading down to the marsh. And there, on a side road, was the little red



house in the garden, in which he had come to manhood in experiencing family cares and anxieties, in doing responsible work, and in reading good books. There Martje Ruhland was still living with her child. Her parents were dead now, and the business had passed into other hands, though the brother from Kiel was associated with it still in the capacity of procurist, with a small share. Martje was keeping house for him.

Klaus Baas stood there a moment, hesitating whether to go in or not. But for a long time it had been on his mind to go to them straightforwardly sometime, to have a little friendly talk, and to show them that he had prospered, but at the cost of much labor and difficulty.

Martje's brother came toward him from the lighted living-room and gave him his hand with perfect self-possession. Martje Rubland, pretty and girlish looking, and gentle as ever, rose from her chair and asked him, in a quiet, kind way, to take a seat. Before he had a chance to sit down, her child came in, and without speaking or expressing any feeling at all, greeted him with a stiff, polite little handshake. She was an eighteen-year-old likeness of her mother, though a little taller, and she had on a big spotless kitchen apron. Along with the tea things on the big round table by which he was sitting lay all kinds of pieces of cigar-boxes, several fret saws, and some blue tracing paper. While the mother was pouring tea, the girl, sitting across from Klaus, resumed her sawing. They evidently took pride in the fact that they could do something besides the lace making that had annoyed Klaus so much in the old days. They talked about meals, and tea, and going to bed, and tried, simple-heartedly enough, to show him in every possible way how happy they had been in this kind of thing since he had left them the field in peace. The brother had sat down at the place marked by a big stein of beer which the girl had put there.

Klaus Baas was secretly much disconcerted by the turn affairs had taken. Not at all with the confidential, condescending air he had pictured to himself, but rather in a particularly polite and hesitating way, he asked questions

about the death of the father and mother, about the illness of the older sister, about how business was going, how they had been, and so on. Then he had to tell them about Heini Peters, and a little about his own business. All this time the gentle-looking girl was calmly rasping away regardless, with sandpaper and saw. She was evidently trying to make him look at the finished and unfinished results of her efforts — all of them silly, meaningless creations. Klaus, soon feeling himself to be a superfluous, indeed a disturbing element in this completely rounded circle, hunted for an opportunity to get away. After a while a caller came — a somewhat narrow-chested young fellow, who was introduced to him as a clerk at the wood-yard and the daughter's fiancé. The young man, who evidently knew who the stranger was, fell in with the family idea of treating him well, and also adopted a sort of "no questions asked" air, not heartily at all, but condescendingly, as if he regarded Klaus as a father that had deserted his obligations. Then, sitting down beside his sweetheart, he began to saw and rasp with her in the midst of a great whispering. After their guest had listened to their views on the general business situation, he said he thought he must go. They all shook hands with him with a measured politeness. Martje Ruhland, to be sure, told him well meaningly to remember her to those at home. As she and her brother were accompanying him to the door, she said, in her thin, toneless voice, "We sit here this way every evening now," as if she would have liked to add, "If you had just been different, we could have been happy." Klaus nodded, and, saying that he was very glad he had found her so well, left.

Outside in the wet snow, in the bare chestnut lane, he turned to look again at the lighted window, and shook his head. So that was Martje Ruhland. The complacent little Philistine! He had meant to bring comfort and cheer to her. And, good heavens, she was a great deal more complacent than he was! There she was, sitting comfortably behind that window with the child that was just like her. He certainly could have spared himself

that visit. "I don't suit her, and she doesn't suit me," he thought. "The one that suits me is the woman in Blankenese, — the woman I senselessly offended. Wasn't it all right for her to intercede for her only brother? Why did I snap at her that way? I deserved to be told what kind of a man I am! I'd certainly rather go home again to-morrow evening! I can't quarrel with my own people — with the only person I've got in the world. But it won't hurt her to wait and be sorry for two days."

He stayed overnight in a new little hotel where no one knew him. The next morning he took a slow train east and finally reached the rolling country, and after that the fertile stretch covered with trees. Shortly after noon he reached the pretty lakes deep in the tall birch woods. There, on the shore of a blue lake, which in summer fills the air with its sunny reflection, but which now lay gray and dark in ice, stood the church village in which Doris Rotermund lived.

Years ago Klaus had heard that her husband had given up his mercantile business and with her earnings and his had built a house here. The story went that it was a rather convivial place, but not at all out of the way. In the press of his own anxieties, Klaus had not concerned himself further about her. He wondered how she had changed, and how she would receive him. He studied the dark cottages in perplexity, looking for the house that was most likely to be hers. Well, anyway, he wanted to find out how she had been getting along, and to show her how he had been doing.

As he was walking along past a garden into the village, he saw a pretty little girl of about twelve kneeling on the wet ice by the lake. As she knelt there unbuckling the skates from her stout shoes, her light brown hair fell forward over her shoulders. The way she held herself, and her well shaped head, made Klaus recognize her at once. "Hello, there," he said, "where does your father live?"

She looked up indifferently, calmly pushing her hair behind her ears with her free hand. "Over there in the

village," she said, nodding her head across the road. Then she set to work again.

"Just as matter of fact as her mother," Klaus thought. "Are your mother and father well?" he asked.

"Very well," she answered, without looking up from what she was doing.

"I want to come to see you," he said. "Will you take me there, — for I suppose you are not going to skate any more?"

She got up and walked along by him, buckling and arranging her skates as she walked.

They came to an old long, low house, with a tiled roof, surrounded by an orchard. The pretty little thing beside Klaus set up a kind of gay Indian war-whoop, probably to let her little brothers and sisters know she was coming.

"Well," said Klaus, "where is the family?" She listened for sounds in the wide low house, and then said, in her mother's calm way, "They're in the parlor; mother's playing with them."

From the other end of the hall he heard the cries of children, and as the door opened he saw a pretty sight. The warm room, scantily furnished, seemed to serve as the children's playroom. In one corner was a kind of Indian wigwam. Doris Rotermund, in a blue cloth dress, was sitting on a bench, leaning over, with her hands clasped between her knees and her bright eyes fixed attentively on the naked children playing in front of her. She had evidently tried to combine play with a degree of danger, for here and there, in the cracks of the old wooden floor, she had stuck pieces of stinging nettles dried from the year before. The children were having a regular game jumping to and fro among them. Every one seemed to be allowed to endanger the others a little if he were willing to risk his own safety to do it. The game seemed to be an old summer favorite rigged up here rather inadequately to put a little more life into the dreary winter day. The largest two, a boy and a girl of about ten, evidently the two she had used as models for the buckle, were jumping to and fro with glowing faces. But the smaller child, in

some distress, lifted its legs timidly, and could hardly keep from crying. Over this picture of gay child life the scant retiring winter sun shed its ungracious light.

Recognizing him at once, Doris said gravely, "Well, you are a stranger."

"I wanted to come again, just for a little while," Klaus said, "and see how you are getting on." And standing there beside her, he told her about buying the buckle.

She listened to him quietly. Then calling up the children, one after another, she told him their names, and looked on silently while he patted their cheeks. Then he told her about his wife and children. She seemed to know already most of what he told, for she had asked about him now and then in Hamburg.

When he had talked with her for some time, he felt more clearly than ever that she was being cold and queer with him, and that she didn't want to see him alone. At last he got up, still hoping to get a word with her alone. She went out to the entry with him. "You are changed from what you used to be," he said.

Slightly embarrassed, she reached for her hat and jacket, asked where he was going, and went out with him. "I can show you a short cut," she said.

The weather was still clear, but in the east it looked like rain or snow. She led him through the bare wet orchard to a path that wound slowly past the village out into the field. He would have liked to talk intimately with her, but something in her mood and bearing made him keep quiet. When they reached the high ground, she pointed to a village far over in the valley, saying, "Go straight to that village." Then, in order to prevent him from talking about anything else, she went on, far more circumstantially than was necessary, to say that the little place was named Winkel,<sup>1</sup> and that that was a good enough name for it, because, as he could see from here, it lay just in the corner of two ascending lines of forest. Then in a quick, decided way, she held out her hand.

Holding her hand fast, he looked at her gloomily. "Six

<sup>1</sup> Winkel-corner.

months ago," he said, "when I held that little buckle in my hand, I had an impulse: 'You must go and see her again,' it said. 'The calm and breadth and simple truth that surrounds her will give you great joy, will do you a lot of good.' And now I am seeing you again, and you are cold to me."

She looked at him, not as she had looked when she had once walked beside him in the bloom of youth, but with the eyes of an artist seeking in vain the lines of beauty that rejoice his soul. "In those eyes, and around that brow and mouth," she said, "there is a tension that ought not to be there."

"Oh," said Klaus, angrily, "I have had to think hard and work hard, Doris Rotermund. It was stiff, uphill work. Just consider my early life and the conditions I came from."

"Even if a man has to climb," she said sadly, "he should not strain and struggle so that he tears his clothes hideously. Long ago we had a laughing discussion about sins, if you remember. Well, I call *that* a sin. What good does it do a man to gain a lot of outside things — even the whole world — if his soul grows unlovely? And by unlovely I mean narrow, ungracious, and restless."

Klaus had grown very cool. "Well, then," he said, "this is the way you are sending me off." And he held out his hand again.

The tears poured into her eyes. "I remember a young man who had broken loose from his chains, and, already past thirty, was on the way to find happiness. And in that I was able to help him. Now he comes to see me, a Hamburg merchant, who knows how to make money." She shrugged her shoulders, as if to say, "What does that amount to!" and went on, "He is covered with the dust of the road, and he has a hard look in his eyes! In all these years you have not had time to ask for me once!"

He shook her hand, and said moodily: "You are right. I ought not to have come to you."

Nodding in the midst of her tears, she dropped his hand and left him.

He went silently on his way toward the village in the valley. When Doris had mentioned its name in pointing out the village, Klaus had remembered that it was the home of the gentle, dark-eyed girl whom he had played false in the courtyard in Mühlen Strasse, when, in his gay coat, he was bookkeeper in the little varnish factory. Every time since then, when he had gone anywhere near Mühlen Strasse or had seen a girl that reminded him of her, the deed had brought him an unpleasant remembrance. In all other particulars his life seemed to him to have been honest, upright, and deserving — in spite of all kinds of deviations and occasional unnecessary kicking up of dust. But this bit of it was bad. It seemed to have come from a separate evil part of him, and it was in his way still. That quiet village there was her home. He would go there and ask about her, and perhaps learn one more unpleasant thing. Well, why not? He had better go on; maybe everything would be all right; maybe it would be so much all right that he could have a good laugh over it. And a little laughing wouldn't hurt him.

He reached the village, and came to the main street. He asked a youngster coming from school about her, giving her last name. The child pointed to a house close in front of him, where the stable door was open. In the dark entry a woman was bustling around with pails. Looking at her, Klaus saw that it was not the pretty little girl he had known, but hoping to get news of her, he stepped up and asked whether she happened to have a relative that had had a position twenty years ago in Mühlen Strasse in Hamburg.

Washing the wet grain from her hands, the woman said, with an air of distrustful curiosity, "Yes, it was my sister."

"What has become of her?"

"Well," she said slowly, stepping aside to get a better look at him, "she was engaged at that time, but some evil folks broke off the engagement. Then she had a place for several years in Kiel. And then she died."

She led the way, with Klaus passively following her,

into the bare little room, and taking a little picture in a shining frame from the bureau with its crochet cover, handed it to him. And big, handsome Klaus Baas, who stood up straight before every person and thing in Hamburg, took it in his hand very humbly. "Yes, it is she," he said forlornly. "I used to know her then, and I remember her very well."

Meanwhile the man that had been bustling around at the other end of the little stable had come up. He was a little fellow, with knowing eyes, and he had a short pipe in his hand. More communicative than his wife, he said, "After she left Hamburg she was very sad and avoided people. At last she got a little queer, and went to live all alone in the little house across the street just beyond us. She supported herself by washing and sewing. One cold winter day a bad fellow spread a rumor that she was receiving men callers. She left her house, and did not come back. She roamed all around out on the fields beyond the farms. We didn't know anything about it, and never thinking that her mind might have given way, we supposed she had probably gone to Kiel. So we went to her house and locked up the boxes and chests, and then fastened the door, too. The next morning a sick woman who had been lying awake all night said she had seen her going along the street toward her house in the moonlight. Toward noon she was found frozen to death in the field. Of course she was trying to get into her house in the night. My dear sir, I'll never in all my life shut other people's doors again. A few days before that she had said, 'The world is so bad.' She was a little too soft and tender for this world."

Saying that he was sorry his little friend had had such a tragic end, Klaus gently replaced the picture on the bureau, said good-by, and left.

On the street again, he cast a glance at the little house in which "his little friend" had lived. An angry passion swept over him. "What devil is driving me to run around half of Holstein?" he cried to himself. "What am I doing here, anyway? Did I come to see whether that damnable



seed I planted had brought forth a peach tree? Did I want to amuse myself a little bit with the little thing again? It was damnable! Stupid and accursed! Well, I know that now. I did what I meant to, and I know now what it's worth."

And as he pondered he felt that as he was carrying that burden now, he would have to carry it always. "So that's the end of it," he thought. "That's what came of it. I have ruined a life. It was I who destroyed that delicate little creature, just in sport—in overweening arrogance. I'm strong and big and smart, of course, and I have to let people know it. I had to impress that old maid. And day before yesterday I had to let loose on my own good wife. Of course I'm strong and big and smart, and I have to show it. Of course I've got to be haughty and overbearing. Didn't I pounce on Sanna magnificently, though she is far finer and better than I am? And on Arthur Eschen, too! And on Heini Peters, the last time I saw him! Well, I am big and strong and smart. But Arthur Eschen and Heini Peters haven't what I have on their consciences."

By this time he had reached the edge of the village where the street branches. He asked some children standing in the wet snow up by a house where he could strike the road to Neumünster. While the older ones were directing him, one of the smaller ones cried, "What kind of a man is that?" "He's a prince," said another, probably impressed by his size and his bearing. "No," said another, importantly, in a high childish voice, "he's a pilgrim," using a word it had probably learned in school. Klaus caught the word drearily. "And what a pilgrim!" he thought bitterly, branching out into the lonely twilight.

It was a straight, barren Holstein road, bordered by slanting trees. Rain, mingled with snow, beat against him as he walked. "I've been arrogant and grandiloquent all my life," he thought; "a regular Baas—a fool. Even when I used to play that I was the Czar of Russia! And when I told those yarns on the Grossneumarkt. And when I sneaked around St. Pauli like a young clown.

And at noons in Trimborn's office, when I tried to catch shooting stars with my cap. And the more luck of all kinds I've had, the more my grandiloquence has shot up, until day before yesterday it set me beside myself. Think of it—gone mad with arrogance! But now I've caught it.

"It is good for me to know it," he thought gloomily. "Of course it's a good thing. Life has got to be clear and absolutely true. There can't be any concealing or shifting. I have absolutely ruined a human life. I don't know whether there's a God or a beyond. And if I did, it wouldn't change anything. In the first place, it's done; and in the second place, it was and remains my own doing. It's true I didn't intend it, and it's true that many a stupid trick like that turns out all right. But in this case it's done."

He plunged along vigorously through the wet snow. Those straight Holstein roads, with their spare slanting trees, were made to make people taste hours like these to the full. They stretch ahead for miles—it seems to the end of the world. Klaus had not had so much time to reflect since the day he had ridden to Schleswig with Flora twenty years before. "Yes," he thought again, "it's a good thing for me to realize this. The evil was done long ago. I simply didn't know it. It has just been running along behind me like a dumb beast all the time. Now it has caught up with me, and I know what it is. . . . I come of upright parents, from good peasant stock. My father was easy-going, and had some distinction; my mother was severe and faithful. Those qualities, fused, make a good mixture. But it has one failing—it is arrogant. Just as other people inherit gout or deafness, so I've inherited arrogance. From my youth up it has always risen in me in rapidly changing colors, like a bright-colored snake's head. I've never seen it or noticed it, although my good mother used to strike at it with the tongs when I was a child. But now it is fully revealed. This snake, so I have just heard, destroyed a human life; and day before yesterday it wound itself around the person dearest to me on earth.

Now, I'm through with it — forever. Right here on this Holstein road I'm going to throttle the handsome, insolent thing — right around its throat. And now it's gone — Klaas Hinrich Baas. Forty-five years old!"

Talking thus to himself, he came late in the evening to the city.

He went to the Bahnhof Hotel to see if by any chance there was a telegram there from Hasse, though he thought it unlikely that there would be. Then he intended to take the night train to Hamburg, for he felt a strong yearning to get home to Sanna and the children. "And I will be very good to them," he thought.

To his amazement, there really was a telegram waiting for him. Curious, he opened it as soon as he got on the steps leading to the street. With his eyes opening wider and wider, he read that according to a communication from the Hasse firm in Shanghai, the business with the man from Lübeck could not be arranged. It would therefore be necessary for Klaus to go to China instead of Thielen, and to remain there as long as the war lasted. He must go by way of New York on February 22. Klaus felt suddenly staggered — in body and soul. Go to China in ten days! Perhaps for years! And just at this time! He went into the station, bought a ticket, then walked up and down the platform till the train came, hardly knowing what he was doing. Go to China in ten days! And now! Just at the time when he had so many things to make right, and had wanted to do it! Just when he had meant to live a less tense, more gracious life! Go away now — perhaps forever. It was bitterly hard.

The train rattled and rumbled through the night. The snow fluttered softly against the window. His fellow travellers slept, or sat in silent thought, while Klaus's soul toiled and labored in the depths. He looked out gloomily into the night. Well, that was the way; now he must accept this too. Everything, everything! He must bear every act in the course of his life, and now this separation too. He must accept everything! And yet he must not despair or grow hard. He must do, calmly and kindly,

anything that could still be done. And if a man had only ten days — or only three, for that matter — to follow a course he knows to be right, he must follow it. And if the eternal powers had willed or permitted him to have the many odious experiences he had had during the last few days, and even if now, when he wanted to make things right, they willed that he should go away, — perhaps forever, — well and good ! He would silently do what was left for him. Then before man or God — if there were a God — he would stand fast ! He would not let himself be cast down, either by the experiences of to-day, or by his quarrel with Sanna, or by this China prospect. He would not slip out of the stable door like a bad servant, or sneak out of the world like a rascal. He would remain there, brave and cheerful, so long as he had a post to fill. It is enough for us to stand firm on the earth and desire what is good. Nothing — not even the worst that can happen to a man — can be stronger and greater than his own will. And therefore !

He reached Altona, made a quick connection, and toward midnight knocked against the bedroom window in Norder Strasse in Blankenese.

Sanna came to the window at once, saw him standing there in the bright snowy night, and went to the door just as she was. Putting her arms around him, cold and wet with snow, she said, "I wanted to come to the station, but I didn't dare to leave the children alone. Do you know that you have to leave for China in ten days ?"

"Yes, I know," he said, caressing her. "And Sanna," he said, "we are going to be happier together than we have ever been before."

Of all that he had been through he said nothing.

## CHAPTER XXVII

ON a dull, windy February afternoon, ten days later, Klaus said good-by to the children and went to Hamburg with Sanna. At the station they got into the carriage Hasse had sent and drove to Wex Strasse, where Klaus was to say good-by to his mother. She was still living in the same place, but now as tenant of her married son, who had set up a locksmith shop in the court.

She was old and decrepit now, and suffered from a constricted chest. When they went in, she was sitting with her spectacles on her nose, in front of the drawer of her big sewing table, usually carefully locked. She was counting out the rent to her daughter-in-law. "You will have to wait a minute," she said to Klaus.

After waiting for Sanna and his sister-in-law to go out, Klaus said, "Well, mother, now I have to go away again."

Taking off her glasses, she said, with a satirical little smile, in an effort to cheer him up and to keep from showing her feelings, "Up here above us lives the silliest old woman — yesterday she went to Wedel to see her children. And here she says that in Wedel they can hear the war plainly — every single cannon boom! You see she heard the cannon in Cuxhaven, and thought it was the ones in Asia!"

"I'm hoping to be back in a year, mother," Klaus said, "but it may be longer."

Smoothing down her apron with her thin old hand, she looked helplessly around the room. "Yes, yes, I see," she said.

"Isn't there anything at all I can do for you, mother?"

She shook her head. "Everything's all right, Klaus, except that I can't keep warm in bed any more. I don't

know why; perhaps it's because the quilt is old and the feathers have gradually got lumpy. You see, when I lie on my back and raise my knees a little—you always used to call it making a dog-kennel—then the feathers all fall down every which way and my knees get cold."

"Why didn't you tell me that long ago?" he said reproachfully. "Sanna will send you a new quilt to-morrow."

She raised her hands in horror. "That would never do, boy. Why, what would Fritz's wife think, if she knew I told you that?"

"I'll just act as if I noticed that the quilt was old myself," he said. "A new one will come to-morrow. And mind you take it! Isn't there anything else, mother?"

"No, no, my boy," she said again. "So long as I'm able to get around and help myself there's no trouble. The only thing I don't like to think of is when I come to die. Fritz's wife is all right, of course; but she doesn't quite see things, or know what to do in a case like that." She shook her white head. "Otherwise I'm not a bit afraid of death. I've been pretty severe with you—but it was necessary. You always held your nose too high in the air, your father and all of you—and you most of all. And then He—I mean God—humbled me so. Well—everything is all right—I'm not afraid to die. But it's true I don't like to think of my last bed. But then—I've got over the fences and the hedges in my lifetime all right, and I'll get over the grave all right too."

Klaus looked helplessly into her old face. She who had worked so much and looked out for so much was now afraid about the last little offices! And he must go away and could not help her. "I'll speak to both of the women," he said. "The two women can certainly attend to one old lady."

She ran her stiff old hand over the table and smiled again in her mocking old way. "Well, come back to your family safe and sound," she said, "and remember me to Hanna and her husband!" Getting up, she went to the bureau. "I wanted to give you something to take along," she said, "something I've always kept by me." She took

out a chip box about as big as her hand and plainly very old, and held it up in her shaking hand. "I cut off some of Lotte's hair and some of your father's when they died," she said. Then she began to weep bitterly. "I don't want it to go into strangers' hands. Will you take it and put it by — you went through everything with me."

Caressing her and kissing her with a trembling mouth, Klaus went out.

They drove back to the station, got the baggage, and drove to the harbor. Sanna sat beside him, pale and silent, holding his hand close.

On the Lombards-Brücke he took a good look out on both sides of him. The deep blue water was ruffled by the wind; the buildings round about stood out in the fresh, gray light of water and sky. Everything seemed to stand there clear and secure in that subdued, austere, northern light. Turning his thoughts away from the lonely old woman he had just left, Klaus said, "Do you know, when I come back, I think I will manage to be connected in some way with the city. I'll take some kind of office or make myself useful in some other way. I'd like above everything to see that children have plenty of room to play in, Sanna. When I was a boy I was a great player, and I know what it means. For children all of life and art is in play."

In front of the main station on the Glockengiesserwall there was a blockade caused by the street-cars that cross there and the throngs of people and vehicles. Looking out over the traffic, he said, "It's been thirty years since I came here with my father, with those old yellow classics under my arm. All the people walking along here amazed me then, and I wondered how they all made a living here, in the midst of nothing but stone and iron. Now there are more than twice as many here. Since that time I've had a good deal to do with economic conditions and I've found out how they make their living, and indeed I've done a good deal of that myself. I have been what my name indicates, a Baas — that is to say, a boss, that is, a breadgiver. My forefather was a boss in the wheatfields;

I am one in a merchant's office. And yet, when I see a throng of people like this, I have the same feeling of surprise I had thirty years ago. I suppose there's still something in me of the country boy that grew up among the wheatfields that supply bread and porridge. Just look at the crowds!"

Winding its way slowly along, the carriage set off toward the harbor at a good pace, and soon reached the long streets along the docks. Then it stopped, and they went into the long piers at which two or three steamers were loading or unloading cargo. Through the noise of the workmen, they passed along among huge piles of sacks, timber, hides, metals, casks, and boxes. Wheelbarrows rolled heavily along, clattering on the iron-covered planks; the windlasses were pulling on their cogwheels; chains were clanking against the hatches. Over all sounded the roaring, washing, and beating of the waves against the pier and the whistling and hissing of the steam. On the various pillars were posted the names of all the seaport towns from Cherbourg to Hongkong. The whole world seemed, in a sense, to be lined up at this one spot. As a boy, Klaus had seen all this traffic every day; as a man, it had given him a great sense of pride and satisfaction. Now it left him cold, and he only gripped Sanna's arm more tightly.

They went over the gangway on board the ship, and up to the stateroom reserved for him. They inspected it carefully, each thinking sadly, "Now comes the parting."

"Klaus," said Sanna, quietly, "I'm anxious about how our youngest boy is going to turn out. There's a weak, rather timid streak in him that makes him rather like Uncle Eberhard or Arthur. If he doesn't develop, he won't please you when you get back."

Klaus shook his head. "I know, Sanna," he said, "that one of my children may be like my mother—distressing itself and others by its own hardness. And I know that another of them may be like Uncle Eberhard, lacking in will and efficiency. Nature blindly endows people with a collection of gifts which their ancestors had. They may



be useful or useless, good or bad. It is not possible to break or to reform the original character; nor is it right to blame or despise it. The only thing that can be done is to improve it. You can strengthen the weak somewhat, and soften the obstinate, and turn the mischievous toward good; and you can humble the arrogant and presumptuous a little. I've found that out, Sanna. Bring up the children as your mother brought you up, firmly and kindly. You are now as she was, without a husband, my poor little wife."

Sanna struggled with her tears.

"Where are the books?" said Klaus at last.

She showed him a small new set of the noblest books of all times. "When I was a young man," he said, "I read them, and certainly profited by them, although I was still too young for them. But since then I haven't seen books like these for twenty years, and indeed, I've scorned them. Now I'm taking them along, and I know I'm going to read them. It seems, Sanna," he went on, with a somewhat mocking little smile, "it seems as if this man has to keep on learning and unlearning as long as he lives."

"Oh, I love you so," said Sanna, putting her arms around him. "I love you so tremendously! How can I live without you?"

He caressed her cheeks again and again, and kissed her. "Hark! there's the whistle! You must go now, Sanna! If you don't, you'll have to go along to China! How I'd love to take you! Dear, dear comrade! But now—go, dear. I love you. It has to be, Sanna!"

They went out of the stateroom and down toward the gangway. He went over with her, and then walked back alone. Seeing an elderly lawyer he knew, who was going as far as New York, he went up to him and said something, he hardly knew what, for he kept looking over at Sanna standing beside a pile of huge mahogany tree trunks, pale and straight as she had been the time he wanted to kiss her and she had said, "I will not."

The gangplank was drawn in. Down from the bridge shrieked the mate's whistle. With a loud roaring, the big

boat drew out of the dock. The tuning up of gay music broke harshly in upon his sadness. Pale, with brows drawn, he kept his eyes fixed on Sanna over there. Then the boat glided to the larboard out into the channel, and he saw her no more.

They made their way slowly through the harbor. Below them they heard the noisy crowd of tugs, ferry-boats, lighters, and harbor boats. A great steamer coming up the harbor glided close past them. The music mingled in discord. The hammering on the wharves sounded clear and distinct. On the other side the masses of buildings with towers and spires rising above them lay silent.

When he came on deck next morning he found that the northwest wind had become fresher and colder. On the weather side a sloping wave now and then struck hard against the ship, throwing its foam over the railing. Going over to leeward, Klaus found a place beside the cabin, and peered over toward land; but all he could see was a thin streak of yellow sand and a lighthouse — undoubtedly the Norderney lights.

It was regular North Sea weather. Gray clouds, varying in dulness, overlapped and covered the whole sky. Below rolled the sea — also dark gray. Only from a tiny cleft in the clouds, in several places far and near, a lurking gleam shot through, like the glitter of shining steel.

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